ACTIVISION SPOTLIGHT: V8II, QUAKE 2, TONY HAWK, TOY STORY 2 AND MORE!

Volume 4 • Issue 10 • September 1999

PS Extreme

THE PLAYER'S UNOFFICIAL MONTHLY GUIDE TO THE PLAYSTATION

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THE RETRO REVOLUTION!

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EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS

GREG OFF
OFF@QUAKE.NET

At a recent press junket, I was privy to a conversation among a group of my video game journalist peers. The conversation revolved around the PlayStation and its lack of original content; more specifically, the staggering amount of sequels coming out this holiday season. The argument being made was that, now with the next generation PlayStation hardware announced and around the corner, this last generation of games is lacking spark and ingenuity. One went on to further state that, as far as he was concerned, any game with a number 2 or 2000 on the end of it was going to automatically be penalized five review points. My question to them was; "what's so wrong with a sequel?" Sure, it can be exciting to play and experience something new and different, but I believe that, in theory, there's no such thing as a "new" game. I challenge anyone to come up with a game they've played — released in the last five years, that doesn't borrow ideas, concepts or game mechanics from another (kind of like that Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon thing). I asked a few friends to take the challenge, and they were shot down every time. Let's look at it another way; Take ice cream, for example. Sure, Augustus Jackson (its inventor — who says the internet's only good for porn and bomb schematics?) could have been complacent with plain old vanilla. But, lo and behold, we got chocolate and strawberry, too! As time went on, people improved on it, adding textures and flavors (Baskin Robbins' got 31). Sure, not all work (Bubble Gum, bleh), but others become instant classics (Chocolate Chip). My point is that there are still plenty of amazing game playing experiences to be had on the PlayStation, and the fact that a lot of these are sequels or "new" games with familiar themes shouldn't make a difference, as long as they provide quality entertainment and offer new twists, enhanced features and hours of fun. Here are a few examples: Dino Crisis and Resident Evil 3, Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver and Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation, Pac-Man World and Ace Combat 3, Quake II and Vigilante 8 II, Final Fantasy VIII, Wipeout 3, Um Jammer Lammy, Gran Turismo 2, Spyro 2, and Crash Team Racing — I could go on, but I think you get the idea. So, getting back to where I started; In my opinion, this year's products will be the best the PlayStation has ever had to offer, sequels or not. While you might have to dig through some of the crud to get to the good stuff, there's still plenty of it to be found — right here, right now.

In keeping with tradition and typical fashion, thanks for reading the mag and we'll see you in thirty.

EDITOR BIOS

GREG OFF
After the "Flowbee Incident", Greg decided that it's much safer to pay professionals to cut his hair. While spending most of his days hassling Kramer to write the news and his nights channel surfing, hoping to find the lost "Ronco Beef Jerky Dehydrator" infomercial, he actually does find time to play the greatest PS games.

DAVE WINDING
Dave's golf game is in the toilet these days. He just can't seem to get any consistency off of the tee. To add insult to injury, his short game has gone south — just can't seem to putt. So, he, once again, turns to video games. Dave believes that Pac-Man World rocks! He's also looking forward to getting his hands on CTR.

CHRIS KRAMER
This month, it seems that Kramer is the Responsible One in the office (not). Of course, the news was still late, but that can be written off as directly tied to an emergency trip to Japan. From now on, Kramer vows to act as Greg's Social Director; he's no longer allowed to book press trips without consultation.

MARK ANDROVICH
Mark wrote numerous articles and reviews for Websites and videogame fanzines before joining the PSExtreme staff. He currently relies upon meat sticks, Arrowroot biscuits, and apple juice for sustenance. He is licensed to practice law, though not to kill, and has never met a lawyer he did like.

ADAM PAVLACKA
Adam could have gone to Japan this month, but he failed to realize that one needs a passport to travel around the world. After a brief moment of depression, he quickly returned to playing Wipeout 3 and threatened anyone who came near with bodily harm. We think he may have snapped.

ERIC WINDING
Eric spent the last month or so trying to figure out how to use his new email & phone system. Since he still has no clue how these technical super-devices work, he has relegated himself to simply shouting real loudly and breaking controllers. Next month, Eric looks to take on the soda machine!

DILLION MERZ
Tired of getting kicked around by THE MAN, Dillion has started up his own crusade throughout the midwest and southern Louisiana. He is armed with only a licorice stick and his invisible friend we'll call, Mini-D. While we are not quite sure where he is at this moment, you can bet he is making the world a better place.

ALEX ANDREWS
After an extended period in a "health spa" in the South of France, Alex is back with his odd wit and personal space. We haven't quite figured out exactly what his fascination with fabric samples is about, but every time he comes in the office, he's got another book full and the latest issue of Traditional Home.

CURRENTLY PLAYING

Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver, Driver, Wipeout 3, Alien Trilogy	Pac-Man World, Driver, Sarge's Heroes, Super Speed Racing, Need for Speed: High Stakes.	Put Put Goes to the Parade, Shelly Duval's It's a Bird's Life, and My Little Pony: Sassy Stable	Hop scotch, Tic tac toe, Peek-a-boo, and Soul Reaver.	Wipeout 3, Street Fighter Alpha 3, Ape Escape, Tarzan and Final Fantasy VIII.	Knockout Kings 2000, FOX NBA Basketball 2000, NFL Blitz 2000, Driver	Um Jammer Lammy, Bass Landing, Jade Cocoon	World Driver Championship, Tarzan, Interplay Sports: Baseball 2000

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GRAND THEFT AUTO 2
STEALING CARS IS THE EASY PART

SEE THE FILM AT WWW.GTA2.COM

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on the cover

page 48

EXmail

Interesting letters regarding a wide range of topics, including the end of the world, the beginning of the universe, the size of space and the effects of close proximity to a black hole on the human toe and fore-foot.

10

EXnews

Tittilating tidbits of info from our procrastinator-in-chief, Chris Kramer. Top tidbits include EA's Rock Power desires, Power Rangers long overdue, and much, much (much), more.

14

EXware

It's a peripheral crisis. Controllers and memory cards are flying about, every which way, willy-nilly. Editors are standing around, wide-eyed, trying to snap shots of the chaos. It's a scene. The police are on alert.

18

EXecute

No codes, this issue.

22

EXclusive

It's one gigantic EXclusive overload, pals. Crash Team Racing, Spyro 2, Fighting Force 2, Die Hard Trilogy 2, Tomb Raider 4, tons of EA games, loads of Activision games... good grief. It must be hard for you industry outsiders to deal with the violent joys that paint these pages in CMYK color.

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EXcerpt

Candid conversations are our specialty. This month we have two of them with the important people behind two of the most popular parts of the gaming megaustry — Lara Croft and Wrestling. Oh, what a pair.

48

EXtreme

We've gotten all in the mood for retro. We've slipped into our treasured old Pac-Man Underpos, turned the lights real low, sat down in front of the old Zenith and set the channel on "3". This is gaming... gaming, most excellent.

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EXpecting

When a wide variety of unreleased games need to be presented to you (our readers), we are determined to present them with a fanciness that won't be beat. It's a dirty little pride we have inside us that just can't be quashed.

spotlight on ACTIVISION

page 38

Acitivision gives us the low, low down on their latest PSX offerings.

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Big, chunky pixels rule.

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PAGE

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EXit

We go out with a pronounced cacophony this issue, with word of an upcoming issue, including the one after this one.

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EXport

If you have to ask yourself if you're going to get bit on the hand by an angry mongoose or porcupine (or even a startled opossum) when you open a magazine, you shouldn't read it. It's just common sense. That said, go ahead and check out Spriggan: Lunar Verse and Tondemo Crisis!

70

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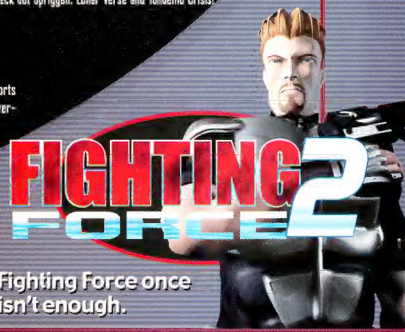
SPorts

Ohhhhh mama. There's some real sassy, southern sports editorial pages, right there. It's almost like an advertisement for plain goodness.

EXrated

Reviewing games is our other specialty. Our reviewers are so accurate with their reviews and scores that nobody ever disagrees with us. It's not scary, but it's oddly comforting and gets us a lot of respect and email.



Fighting Force once isn't enough.

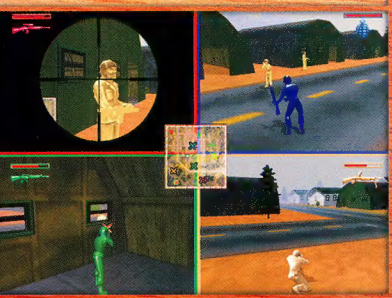
ARMY MEN SARGE'S HEROES

Character-Based Combat.

RATING PENDING RP

PlayStation

NINTENDO 64



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ARMY MEN
AIR ATTACK

Intense Helicopter Action.

RATING PENDING RP

PlayStation

Hot Topic: HOW TO SCORE.

Reviewing a videogame isn't always as simple as it seems. After playing a game for hours upon hours and trying every possible option and setting, we've got to reduce all the efforts of a myriad of programmers and designers to a simple score designed to give people an idea of whether or not the game is any good.

Movie reviewers have a similar task. The main difference is that no one is going to be shelling out $50 to see a movie. So, if Ebert loves a film which you think is garbage, you are only out $5 to $8 — not including the cost of popcorn. You aren't going to waste more than two hours of your life watching the film, and you won't be stuck owning something you don't like. Another difference is that movie audiences generally care about just one thing. Yes, reviewers can talk about the lighting, the camera angles, the soundtrack, or the allusions to Citizen Kane, but in the end the audience just wants to be entertained.

Videogames are much more complex. Some people want an intense experience, no matter how brief. Some people want great-looking graphics, no matter how simple the gameplay. Some people want a game which they can play over and over again without getting bored. Some people don't even care about the gameplay as much as about the price — they just want a cheap diversion or an inexpensive gift. It is quite hard to keep all these different motivations in mind. A game which meets one person's expectations might not meet the expectations of another.

Considering how different people are, it always amazes me when my scores "gel" with other magazines. I have been waiting for the day when a game I love gets trashed by every other reviewer and I look stupid. But that won't deter me from "calling them as I see 'em." As long as I give reasons in support of my rating, and impart enough information about the game to help readers make an informed decision, I've done my job.

Do you think that it is a coincidence that all the major videogame magazines use different rating systems? Are they trying not to be compared with one another? And which system is best anyway — number scores, stars, letter grades, medals, or percentages? Is there even an objective standard to base a review upon, or is every review simply the subjective opinion of the writer? If it is the latter, can you explain why there is often a consensus of opinion between magazines? Should there be a back-up system in the event one reviewer's opinion is vastly different from everyone else?

Of course I am biased, but I think that we've got it right. A percentage score reminds us of our common educational experiences and is easy to immediately understand. On the other hand, is 3 out of 5 stars a good score? It is more than half of the total, but there are still two higher possibilities. With over 100 possible scores to assign, we can also make distinctions that other magazines cannot. For example, you know that an 80% means that a game just squeaked by into the Silver (Good) category whereas an 89% is just short of being Gold (Great). If you were in charge, what system would you use?

-Mark Androvich

Dear PSExtreme,

Sorry to say, you mess up a little. I won't be a geek and tell you every frigging detail that you miss, but seeing how I love wrestling and games... in the June issue on page 17, bottom right, WCW/NWO Thunder is not pictured. The picture is of WWF Warzone.

Now for a few questions:

1. Will Star Wars Episode 1 contain playable characters such as the funny Jar Jar Binks, annoying Watto or Anakin Skywalker?
2. Is it just me, or are games getting less violent? Even at 14, I think Grand Theft Auto is child's play. C'mon. If you like Anime, you'll know it gets pretty gruesome out there.
3. Why the heck can't Sony and Nintendo collide and make one all powerful system? Geez man! With all of their knowledge, you'd think they'd get along.
4. Do you know when E3 will be coming to GA?
5. (Very important). Have the monkeys been bothering you lately?
6. Nintendo (boo, go away) has actually stolen Pikachu, and Pokémon altogether. Have you noticed? Pikachu actually came out on the PlayStation as a title called Poy Poy and Poy Poy 2.

There. That is my $0.02.

Member of the Goat Clan,
Dale Skrobot
(baa)

Sorry about the wrestling screen shot error. We'll do a reverse double half nelson on the person who's responsible.

1. *The playable characters will be Obi Wan, Quigon Gin, Captain Panaka and Queen Amedela.*
2. *Hmmm. It's a very subjective thing... that violence stuff. Your sensitivity to violence is really dependent on how much of it you've been exposed to already. It doesn't seem like games are getting less violent. It seems that violence is more common.*
3. *Whoa! That'd rule. Then we really could play Super Mario Alloy.*
4. *Never. Thanks goodness. Sorry.*
5. *Yes, they've been chasing the chickens around relentlessly for the past weeks. Very annoying.*
6. *Are you sure? Weren't all the Poy Poy characters, like, little kids or something?*

Dear PSExtreme,

I had given up on all game magazines as I was no longer getting good consumer information, just overly pompous attitude disguised as a "review". That is why I was so happy to find your magazine. It breathed new life in to the game mag industry. But it now seems that all the free golf trips and "PR sweet talks" are turning PSExtreme in to one of the mags to forget about. In my last copy of PSExtreme, it was noted how PSExtreme is GLAD that Thrill Kill was being kept from consumers. Are you so quick to wish everyone the loss of the first amendment as well?

Ratings are here for a reason. The majority of buyers are over 18 and can decide for themselves what games they do and do not want to buy. It is disgusting when a company like EA plays parent to the consumer. It is even more disgusting when a game mag, the people who are supposed to be helping the consumer, praise such decisions. I truly hope a lot of people out there stop buying games from E.A. and stop buying your mag unless you get back on track.

I am fortunate enough to have a copy of Thrill Kill, and by NO illegal means. I have shown TK to a lot of people, from younger to older, female to male, gamer to novice, and they all like it. The girls are happy to have characters with more attitude than they would dare to convey, and say things like "Wow! I did that?!?!", and the guys just wished I lacked morals and would burn them a copy.

So much for game mags with integrity.

From: Who Cares

P.S. I am in the game industry. I don't know the Thrill Kill folks but it is sad that they put in the time to make a game that lots of people would enjoy, only to be Bible Belted at the back end.

You misunderstood Chris's comments about Thrill Kill. He wasn't saying it shouldn't have come out because of the violent content. He was saying it shouldn't have come out because it was a crappy game and no fun to play. In fact, the only good thing the game had going for it was the ultra-violence, and the novelty of that wore off after about 30 minutes, leaving a boring fighting game... not to say they couldn't have fixed up the gameplay before releasing it. Oh well, we'll never know.

Dear PSExtreme,

First off, in the July issue's table of contents, you had Fighting Force 2 listed under the EXclusive section but, when I looked, it wasn't there! What the heck happened? Well, moving on to the next subject; I too, really wanted a PocketStation. Is there any way we can get Sony to release it in the states after all? When I finally heard it would come out this summer, I was happy as could be. Now I'm just plain mad. Now, for the last subject. What was that guy from "bleem!" thinking? He thought

it would open up a new market. The games may sell more but Sony loses out on the hardware that would normally be required to play the game. The PC industry wouldn't like it if someone took a more powerful console like the PSX2 and created an emulator that took apart the Windows program and would now be able to play PC games on their PSX2. The developers might, since their games would be selling more copies, but the guys that make the PC's wouldn't since, instead of playing the game using a thousand or more dollar machine, we would be using a much cheaper way, therefore they wouldn't like it one bit. I also wonder, if bleem! was "never designed to be a competitor to the PlayStation console" then why is he selling the thing? If he made a handful and handed them out to friends it would be more understandable,but now he has created a business out of it. A problem with the emulators is we don't have laws that target them directly (Well, we don't yet. Hopefully that will change.), instead we must rely on already existing laws that are similar to what they're suing for. Sony would probably say they don't need any help, but maybe the courts should hear from the loyal Sony consumers. Millions of people that would back Sony up 100 percent. They should hear how we feel. Well, thanks for reading my long letter. I hope I didn't bore you!

See ya later,
Patrick Calderaz

Ahh, sorry about missing Fighting Force 2. We were told we'd have it in time for that issue, but it didn't quite make it. It's in this one (hopefully).
You make some good points about Bleem, and there's nothing wrong with your reasoning, but it seems like Bleem really isn't as big a threat to Sony as they act. There's currently no law against developing an emulator, so you can't blame the Bleem guys for doing something illegal. It's also probably not going to hurt Sony's profit margins for a handful of PC enthusiasts to be able to play some PlayStation games on their PC's. Bleem is more of a novelty than serious competition to Sony. The mass market consumer wants to be able to play games easily, in their living room, on their big ol' TV sets. Not fiddle with settings and obscure PC configurations and key disks and Windows and all the hassle it takes to play a game in Bleem on your tiny monitor (if it works right at all). Bleem's cool for PC hackers, but not really for gamers.

Dear PS Extreme,

Salutations. I am "Jerky-Jesse," a devoted member of your magazine. I am writing you to ask 3 questions — so please, bear with me.

1. Why is it ever magazine that I have (PSEx, GamePro, EGM, etc.) have a different release date for Final Fantasy VIII? I really need to know the exact date so I can "plan-ahead."
2. Even though I doubt this, do you know what kinds of monsters and such will be in Resident Evil Three: Nemesis? My friend and I really want to know — us being the "ultimate" fans of the series.
3. How can people just comment about you not editing your magazine? I wish I could ask them how they could make it better. And if I did ask them, I am sure that they would come up with a single, simple answer: There IS no way to make the magazine any better!

Well, thank you so much, and I hope that people learn.

Your "Too Fine" writer reader,
"Jerky-Jesse"

PS: Thank you for being there when I need some humor.

Thanks for the kind words! (Really).
1. It's because we're all guessing, friend Jerky. At least, us all having different dates shows that we're not stealing infos from each other.
2. Mostly undead, flesh-eating type monsters; Human, animal, human/animal combo creatures, mutated human and mutated animals, mostly.
3. We don't mind too much when they point out our editing errors. We know they're usually right, but we also know they don't know what its like to work on a magazine's deadlines. Editing sucks. At least we're not morons and think we're perfect.

Dear PSExtreme,

Thumbs up to the candid interview with the developers at bleem!. In light of Sony's crackdown, it took both courage and integrity on your part to bring this story (and their side) to the public. Lest we forget in our general adoration for the PlayStation, Sony's a corporation like any other, who's interest lies in generating profit and thwarting those who would potentially cut into that profit. Sony's done many great things for videogamers worldwide, but they don't necessarily have the gaming community's best interests in mind.

Richard Diaz
Centerville, OH

It was quite an interesting interview. We've got great respect (but no envy) for them for going up against Sony and surviving so far. It will be very interesting to see the outcome. Sony has a right to defend their property, but it does seem like they're pretty narrow-minded about the emulators. It probably would have been easier and cheaper for Sony to just buy the company (bleem!, LLC).

Dear PSExtreme,

Will Gran Turismo 2 have a clutch for manual transmission? I have yet to see a game utilize a clutch. I believe a real racing simulator such as GT2 should have a clutch. R2 for up shift, L2 down shift and R1 for clutch and, if you didn't use it, you lose speed, unless done at exact RPM, like if you power shift. And, if you power shift at the wrong RPM, your car grinds and you slow down. Please answer and please let the people at Polyphony digital know to include a clutch for GT2

Hawkfam

Seems like it's hard enough translating gears onto a PlayStation controller. However, it sounds like a good idea for those specialized wheels, that you can buy, with the gas and break pedals. That'd be pretty cool alright.

Dear PS Extreme,

I remembered a game from quite a while ago, and figured that, since you have the best mag exclusively for the PlayStation, you guys could help me with the name. It was a fighting game with a weird concept. You created your own robot-like fighters with the pieces supplied with the game. You would then plug them into system, and they would appear on the screen, and you could use them to fight. I love the idea of creating your own fighters, and would love the chance to possibly buy the game, even if it is in Japanese. Please, try to help me out.

Thanks a lot.
KAU

P.S. If you don't know, try to give me a site to find it...or ask the chickens, they might know.

We asked the chickens and they started chanting. "Roooboo Pit, Rooboo Pit, Robo Pit, Rooboo Pit." We don't know what it means.

Dear PSExtreme,

Oh, why me? Why me? I was just surfing the net and I thought I better check my E-mail! So I checked and I found that Webmaster PlayStation had E-mailed me back after I had written about a page. So, I checked it out and, they replied to me with two measly sentences! I am tired of being ripped off by those people at Webmaster PlayStation! I was also wondering if you could answer these questions for me? Is Jet Moto better than Jet Moto2? Why are PlayStation WCW video games so bad? Where do you hit the code to call in another wrestler in WWF Warzone? What would you rate Rally Cross 2, on a scale from one to ten? After beating the competition in Cool Boarders 2, how do you mirror to go to the U.S. Open? Finally, would you like to be my pen pal? We could share information or we can just talk. Could you please think about it.

From
Tucker

We're sorry to hear you only got a two sentence reply from the web people. Sometimes two aren't enough. Hmmmm. Now, to the juicy answers. No. Dunno. Dunno. 8. Dunno. Thinking.... already have too many pen pals. Don't feel bad though, there are surely tons of people out there who would be your pen pal. Keep trying.

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Send Greg a flowbee! He needs a shave! OFF@quake.net

TEEN
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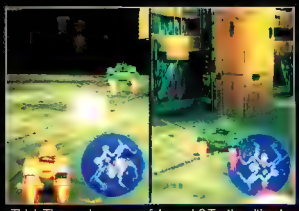
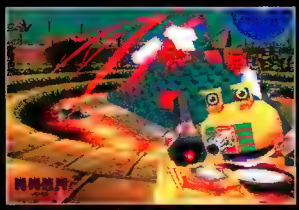
TINK TANK

The Tiny Tank with the Big-Ass 'Tude.

Tiny may have the body of a vending machine, but he's got the spirit of a rottweiler.



Think Tiny packs a powerful punch? Try the ultimate destruction of the two-player, death-match mode.



Ever seen a pack of itsy-bitsy piranha devour a water buffalo? Size is a poor indicator of annihilation potential.

Chaos has struck Sentrax, the world's largest defense contractor. And now its evil robots are destroying the earth. Mankind may not make it to the 22nd century. The only hope is a bright yellow tank the size of a riding lawn mower. Can Tiny, with his 80mm cannon, Gatling guns and assorted rocket launchers save the human race? Maybe. But even if he can't, he's gonna piss a lot of people off in the process.

PlayStation®

from around the globe

NEWS EDITOR: CHRIS KRAMER

EA Wants Your Rock Power

Can you rock? Prove it. Electronic Arts wants your music for possible inclusion in the upcoming Road Rash Unchained. Unlike past Road Rash games, which have featured expensive, boring soundtracks from major-label bands you've never heard of, EA now wants to go for the cheaper bands you've never heard of. Hey, no one really cares what songs are playing in the menu screens anyway, so why should the industry's first billion dollar company shell out anymore cash? They'd much prefer to spend the money on motion-capturing wrestlers, attending NASCAR events desperately trying to fool attendees into buying their game and John Madden's room service bill (staggeringly huge, rest assured).

[illegible] looking for "aggressive tempo-driven music, with an edge that fits with motorcycle racing," so don't [illegible] got cannons in it. The PS Extreme News suggestions for musical styles to [illegible] the new Road Rash [illegible]

[illegible] you [illegible] Rash, zip over to EA's [illegible] web [illegible] to read [illegible] and print out [illegible] simplex [illegible] agreement (whereupon [illegible] ur band [illegible] ay the [illegible] s to your soulds and music [illegible] wkins [illegible] n) then send your crappy four- [illegible] mer [illegible] CD to Road Rash Music Search, c/o [illegible] c Ar [illegible] Parkway, Redwood City, CA 9406[illegible]. [illegible] bu [illegible] pedal to metal, [illegible] [illegible] music [illegible]

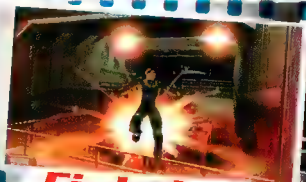
Four Years After Relevancy, THQ Buys Power Rangers License

[illegible] were the types who [illegible] the stock market, or actually made enough [illegible] to invest in anything more than food diets and Dual Shock controllers [illegible] es are that we'd be pouring money into THQ. Over the past few years [illegible] mpany has proven their capability to take a game, no matter how bad [illegible] ll make a profit. They're no Microsoft, don't get us wrong, but as [illegible] zation that can turn a profit on titles like Brunswick Circuit Pro Bowl [illegible] Dice and Jethro [illegible] [illegible] Racing Championship (OK, we may [illegible] e up, but it seems [illegible] must have some sort of business [illegible] t extends the [illegible]

[illegible] point. THQ [illegible] [illegible] though [illegible] anager [illegible] [illegible] Power Rangers license through [illegible] 4. T[illegible] [illegible] five entire years, no one else can produce [illegible] angers [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Meet the New Cast of Characters

Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver



Fighting Force 2

Fear Factor

Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation

Enter their world at **eidos.com**

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from around the globe

Lara Croft Naked Code Finally Revealed

Toolie, PS Extreme's resident internet codes swiper, has asked time and again for people to stop writing him for the legendary "naked" code for Tomb Raider. He maintains that there is no way to see Lara in the buff and wishes that you sick little monkeys would stop interrupting his online searches for midgets, chickens and obscure arcade games. We're here to tell you that, for once, Toolie Is Wrong (which is weird, cause usually He Knows). There is a way to see Ms. Croft sans her unmentionables, but you're either going to have to be over 18 or know which sock drawer your dad hides his smut books in.

If you're the type of sad little man who discusses what Lara is "really like" in internet chat rooms, you may be motivated to move your unshaven, hairy tugboat-like bulk down to the local 7-11 or porno book store in order to reverently hold the August issue of Playboy Magazine in your sweaty, Cheetos-stained hands. Neil McAndrew, the most recent of Eidos Interactive's Lara Croft stand-ins, gets her ya-yas (and everything else, for that matter) out in a tasteful pictorial entitled "Tomb Raider — Neil McAndrew, aka Lara Croft, Nude!"

What sort of target marketing is this, exactly? Is Eidos purposefully going out of their way to stir the nascent wrath of legendary Protector of the Children Senator Joseph "Thrill Kill" Lieberman? As if the entire staff of Dimension Publishing doesn't have a hard enough time trying to convince folks that we work in a serious, important industry. Once again, the folks at Eidos have gone out of their way to prove that not only can they throw large parties in small, uncomfortable spaces with not enough free booze, but that They Will Do Anything For A Buck. God love 'em.

In the spirit of investigative reporting, PS Extreme News Editor Chris Kramer immediately ran out and bought the August Playboy, then spent several hours alone in the Dimension Publishing restrooms examining the magazine. His findings? "I just read the articles. That Albert Einstein interview was fascinating."

PlayStation Nirvana Is Just Around The Corner

In June of 1999, something wonderful happened for PlayStation gamers across the country — a PlayStation mecca was formed. Imagine a store filled ceiling-to-floor with everything PlayStation, and you have a pretty good idea of what the official Sony PlayStation store is all about. Located in San Francisco, at the Sony Metreon shopping complex, the PlayStation store just about has it all.

According to Brian Sickles, an employee at the PlayStation store, the store normally stocks 187 different titles, and they have the capacity to hold up to 205 different PlayStation games. "We usually only carry around 50 to 60 titles," Sickles said. This doesn't include all of the accessories and other PlayStation gear (such as the newsstand magazine PS Extreme) which can be found in the store.

Right next door in one corner of the store is a screening room where a PlayStation video can be found. The video is the one that Sony premiered at this year's E3 party. It shows where the PlayStation has been, and where the PlayStation is going. If you missed it at E3, now is a perfect time to check it out. "We usually get a packed house in the room," Sickles said, referring to the screening room.

Steve Guinn, a paramedic by profession, was wandering through the PlayStation store when he saw the PlayStation 2 demo video. Guinn said he was impressed by both the video and the store. "It's great," Guinn said. "If you're a gamer, this is the place to be."

[illegible] was in the store [illegible] Guinn was [illegible] the Metreon store. Wagner said that nearly every game in the store was available to try before you buy. "It's awesome," Wagner said. "Just ask for which one you want and play! I just came over to play the Chocobo racing game."

About the only downside to the PlayStation store is its prices. Everything in the store is for sale at the suggested retail prices. This is by design. Sony does not want to anger some of its retail partners, Sickles said. So, while you may not find any sales at the PlayStation store, you will find just about everything else.

If you're interested in finding out more about the store, or need help in tracking down a hard to find game, give them a call at (415)369-6044. Tell 'em PS Extreme sent ya.

top Selling titles

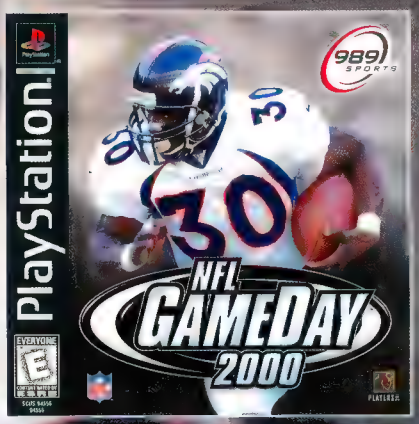
JUNE, 1999

Source: NPD TRSTS Video Games Tracking Service
900 West Shore Road, Port Washington, NY 11050
(516) 625-2294

Working Designs' **Lunar: Silver Star**	989 Studios' **Syphon Filter**	Acclaim's **WWF Warzone**	EA's **Triple Play 2000**	Namco's **Ridge Racer Type 4**
1 last month **	**2** last month 2	**3** last month **	**4** last month 3	**5** last month 1
average retail price $58	average retail price $41	average retail price $20	average retail price $41	average retail price $39
EA's **Need For Speed: High Stakes**	989 Studios' **MLB 2000**	Sony's **Star Ocean: Second Story**	Namco's **Namco Museum Vol. 1**	Sony's **Bloody Roar 2**
6 last month 3	**7** last month 6	**8** last month **	**9** last month **	**10** last month **
average retail price $40	average retail price $40	average retail price $41	average retail price $20	average retail price $49

** Not in Top 10 Last Month. The ratings reflected above are those of Dimension Publishing and do not represent the opinions of NPD.

Exclusively at SEARS



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EXware

It is rare when a game controller receives a Platinum award, because there is usually some flaw to be found. Not so this month. The Naki controller reviewed below is great. In fact, it is so cool that we snagged a few extras specifically for Electric Playground readers. That's right, if the scoundrels can give away stuff, so can we.

Anyway, if you want to snag a set of these killer controllers, here's what you have to do. Play through Area 5 escape and score 100%. Then, snap a picture of the screen and send it in to our EXmail address. The 'X' must be visible. The first four entries will each receive a pair of the Universal Rocker Controllers. Much better reward for a Dual Shock game than two crummy Dual Shock compatible controllers!

General contest rules apply which means, if we know you personally, you can't win. All decisions of the Electronic Publishing staff are final. If you complain, we reserve the right to make fun of you.

Universal Rocker Controller

Naki

MSRP: $29.95

There's some product that hardly commands an

We haven't found a third party controller that's as universally cool as Naki. Actually, we've found a few, but they've been pretty lame. The Naki Universal Rocker Controller is not only as good as a Dual Shock, it is better.

Slightly larger than an official Dual Shock, the Universal Controller is comfier in the adult hands. The D-pad on the controller is also mighty precise, as opposed to the augmented thing pad. The sticks are also smooth and have the same firmness of any official controller.

A couple of options. The controller also has turbo and slow motion. It is also dual rumble, if you want to use them. If not, the buttons are sensitive and hit the sweet spot. Unlike a considerable number of Dual Shock controllers, there is no dead zone during an intense gameplay session. The Naki controller, however, is not recommended only because the [illegible] makes this device compatible with digital and analog controllers.

What happens is that the controller recognizes the 8 axis and the right stick may override the input from the D-pad. In this mode you lose the convenience of analog, but it allows you to use the pad as you would a normal digital controller. Digital fighting, shoot 'em up, platform games, or retro fans of the Atari 2600 will love this feature. If Naki had come up with a way to switch between digital and analog during gameplay, this would be a perfect controller.

Unfortunately, it does not. You have to pause the game, switch to digital, and then unpause. Not a big deal, but it would be nice to have the option to switch on the fly. Also, the controller has a slight delay when switching between digital and analog. Again, not a big deal, but it would be nice if it didn't have to reset.

Overall, the Naki Universal Rocker Controller is a great controller. It's comfortable, has a nice feel, and is extremely versatile. Even if you're not a fighting game fanatic, you'll find this controller a great addition to your collection.

Hyper Drive

Nyko

MSRP: $19.95

Every once in awhile something comes along that is just plain cool. The Hyper Drive is one of those things. It is excellent for car games.

Actual officials, the type of items you find in a game, are hard to find. If you have used Interact's Jaguar Pro Racer 4 controller, you will appreciate the concept of a steering wheel. Nyko's Hyper Drive is a steering wheel that is designed for the PlayStation. Perfect for extended entertainment, the Hyper Drive is a must for racing fans.

The most feature in the Hyper Drive controller is the analog steering wheel. Unlike previous steering wheels, the Hyper Drive doesn't have the wheel as a separate unit that can be damaged or lost. Nyko has an unit of form a single, solid design. The wheel does not have a range of movement. It can be moved in any direction, which is great when you're playing Wipeout. The Hyper Drive controller is comfortable to hold and use. The analog pedal is formed and not rigid. The Hyper Drive also has a connector for a second controller, which is a nice touch.

Another feature of the controller is the programmable buttons. The controller is outfitted with 4 buttons. Each one is customizable. Using programming mode, the buttons can be assigned any function that is available on the controller. This is a great feature for those who like to play games their own way. The only downside to the buttons is that they are on the front, instead of back.

Overall, the Hyper Drive is a fine controller at a fine price. Just a little something I would like to see in Nyko's future products. Like a 49.95 huge.

Memory Card 4Mb

Nyko

MSRP: $19.95

The Nyko Memory Card 4 is a must. The memory card 4 is the same as the 2 Memory Card 2 with the exception of the memory. The Card 4 is 4 times the memory of the Card 2. If you are a gamer who likes to save your games, you will appreciate the Card 4. Instead of having to switch memory cards every time you want to save your game, you can store all of your saved games on the Card 4. The Card 4 is also compatible with the Game Shark. This is a great feature for those who like to cheat. The Card 4 is also compatible with the Game Shark. This is a great feature for those who like to cheat.

The Card 4 is also compatible with the Game Shark. This is a great feature for those who like to cheat. The Card 4 is also compatible with the Game Shark. This is a great feature for those who like to cheat.

Intensor LX 350

BSG Labs

MSRP: $179.95

The biggest problem with the Intensor LX 350 is that it is not the Intensor LX 350. The brand new, "redesigned" Intensor LX 350 is still an uncomfortable piece of [illegible] with the exception of the price. The price is a bit lower. Unfortunately, it is still too much for what you get.

If you are interested in the Intensor, it is recommend a visit to the store. The Intensor is not for everyone. It is a specialty item. The Intensor is not for everyone. It is a specialty item.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

PSEXware@aol.com by Adam Pavlacka

THRASHER

SKATE AND DESTROY

NOVEMBER 15 1999

defy urban gravity

PlayStation

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OH MY GOD! IT'S COMING RIGHT AT YOU!

SOUTH PARK IS HEADING TO THE PLAYSTATION GAME CONSOLE! WE'RE TALKING ABOUT BIG EVIL CLONES, KILLER COMETS, PROBING ALIENS -- AND ONE INCREDIBLY FAT A**! IT'S UP TO YOU TO KEEP SOUTH PARK SAFE FOR CHEF, MR. GARRISON, MR. HANKEY AND THE REST OF THE TOWN.

WARNING

This game is recommended for mature audiences only. It contains adult language and content.

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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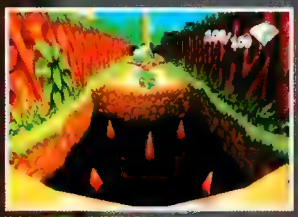
SEND US YOUR CODES AND WIN BIG PRIZES!

Each month we'll pick the best code sent in by our loyal and intelligent readers and send that person a brand spankin' new copy of AGETEC's hot destruction game for the PlayStation, **Armored Core: Project Phantasma** or, if you're funky-funky, fresh, AGETEC's **ASCII Sphere 360** (you decide). But wait! That's not all: if you act now, we'll also include AGETEC's super stylish **ASCII Grip one-handed controller** for the PlayStation, for your controlling pleasure. PLUS **twelve (12) free issues** of the best, the first, monthly dedicated PlayStation magazine, **PSExtreme**, of course! Whoa! That's a lot of cool stuff for just a code; what are you waiting for?

WE HAVE A WINNER!

It's about time someone sent us an awesome code for Croc 2! **Eric Seeds from Conklin, VA.** came through with this hot, hot, hot cheat for Croc 2. There's a serious shortage of Croc 2 codes and we knew, just KNEW, there had to be some good codes for the game. By milliken, we were right. Every time you add them crystals, give Eric a little nod, for he is the provider. Check this out!

Croc 2



UNLIMITED CRYSTALS:
Hold L1 and press ●, ●, ●, ✦, ✦, ✦, ✦, ✦ at the title screen. Then hold R2 and press ● during the game to add one hundred crystals to the current total at any time.

CONTEST RULES: Anyone of any age can enter. The only people not eligible to win are employees of Dimension Publishing or AGETEC, their friends, family, pets and anyone they talk to or know of. Dimension Publishing reserves the right to make any and all decisions regarding the contest. One winner per month will be chosen, at Dimension Publishing's discretion, based on the code or trick supplied by the entrant. If you win but do not specify, in your code submission, which prize you want to receive, then we will choose for you.

Driver

INVINCIBILITY
Quickly press L2, L2, R2, R2, L2, R2, L2, L1, R2, R1, L2, L1, L1.

NO POLICE
Quickly press L1, L2, R1, R1, R1, R1, L2, L2, R1, R1, L1, L1, R2.

REAR WHEEL STEERING
Quickly press R1, R1, R1, R2, L2, R1, R2, L2, L1, R2, R1, L2, L1.

LONG SUSPENSION
Quickly press R2, L2, R1, R2, L2, L1, R2, R2, L2, L2, L1, R2, R1.

MINI CARS
Quickly press R1, R2, R1, R2, L1, L2, R1, R2, L1, R1, L2, L2, L2.
: The collision detection will still behave as if the cars were normal size.

UPSIDE-DOWN SCREEN
Quickly press R2, R2, R1, L2, L1, R2, L2, L1, R2, R2, L2, R2, L1.

VIEW CREDITS
Quickly press L1, L2, R1, R2, L1, R1, R2, L2, R1, R2, L1, L2, R1.

GET AWAY FROM THE COPS
While the police are chasing you, slam the brakes, wait for him to run into your car, then slam the car in reverse. If done correctly, the policeman will say that he lost you. Hit the gas to complete an easy getaway. Another getaway technique that does not expend as much energy as ramming is to use the surrounding traffic. Gently tap the cars in the direction that your car is travelling. The cops will follow and often ram the traffic car instead of your car.
Codes submitted by Kid Quick and DaStranJ.

Omega Boost (Import)

U1 ZONE:
Successfully complete the game in under the hard difficulty setting with 90 AP and without using any continues.
U2 ZONE:
Successfully complete the game in under the hard difficulty setting with 60 AP.
U3 ZONE:
Successfully complete the game in under the hard difficulty setting with 50 AP.
U4 ZONE:
Successfully complete the game under the normal difficulty setting with 90 AP and without using any continues.
U5 ZONE:
Successfully complete the game under the normal difficulty setting with 60 AP.
U7 ZONE:
Successfully complete the game under the hard difficulty setting without using any continues.
U8 ZONE:
Successfully complete the game under the normal difficulty setting.
U9 ZONE:
Successfully complete the game under the normal difficulty setting without using any continues.
V5 ZONE:
Successfully complete the game with 60 AP
INNER LEVEL A:
Successfully complete the game with 60 AP (with invincibility, all weapons at level 9)
INNER LEVEL B:
Successfully complete the game under the hard difficulty setting with 90 AP (with unlimited special attacks, all weapons at level 3)
INNER LEVEL C:
Successfully complete the game under the normal difficulty setting (with highest speed, all weapons at level 9)
INNER LEVEL D:
Successfully complete the game under the normal difficulty setting with 90 AP (with five-way attack, all weapons at level 9)
INNER LEVEL E:
Successfully complete the game under the hard difficulty setting (with improved speed when moving up, down, left, right, all weapons at level 9)
Codes submitted by Kid Quick

Street Sk8er

At the title screen, press Start to bring up the headings before entering the

codes. The announcer will say "Yeah" when you have entered a code correctly

PLAY AS SARAH
←, ←, ■, →, →, ●, R1, R1

PLAY AS MICK
←, →, ●, ■, R2, L1, L2, R1

PLAY AS BONOBO
→, ●, ←, ←, ●, ●, ■, ■

PLAY AS SAHO
L2, ●, R1, ■, →, ■, R1, ■

ALL BOARDS
→, →, R1, R2, ←, ←, L1, L2

ALL STREET COURSES, MIRROR MODE, TIME
→, ●, ■, ←, ■, ●, R1, L1

Codes submitted by Joey Etchison

Ace Combat 3

MISSION SIMULATOR:
Complete all fifty-two missions and save the game. Return to the title screen and load the completed game save file. The "New File" option will change an "S-File" option. Choose that option for a mission simulator that allows any mission to be played with any airplane and difficulty setting.

CONTROL REPLAY:
Press ■, ▲, ●, ✕, L1 or R1 during the replay to change camera angles. Press L2 to add a filter, as if the view were through sunglasses. Press R2 to add motion blurring.

Codes submitted by Kyle Fergassen

Bomberman Fantasy Race

EXTRA SAVED GAME POSITIONS:
Select the "New System Data" option, then hold L1 + R1 + L2 + R2 + Select + Start and press ● to increase the number of saved game positions to fifty.

MIRROR TRACKS:
Finish in first place on all tracks. Then, press Right at the track selection screen.

ALTERNATE FOOTSTEP SOUND EFFECT:
Pause game play and press L1, L1, R1, R1, ↓, ↑, ●

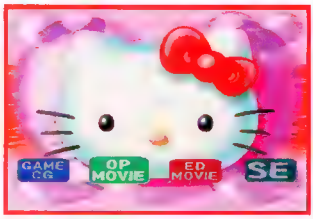
VIEW ENDING SEQUENCE:
Complete all mirror tracks, then press Select at the title screen.

DOUBLE MONEY:
Save the game twice in different slots. Enter the bank and use the money transfer function. Move the money from one slot to the other to double your money

BONUS ANIMALS:
Purchase all five kangaroos and five dinosaurs. The blank kangaroo and white dinosaur will now be available.

Codes submitted by Jon Walker

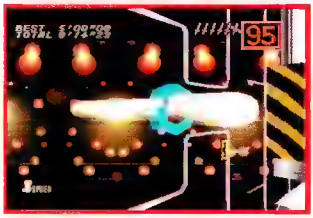
Hello Kitty's Cube Frenzy



BONUS OPTIONS:
Wait until the phrase "Push Start" appears at the title screen. Then, press ↑, ↓, ↓, ←, →, ←, →, ↓, ↑. A sound will confirm correct code entry. Press Start to access new options including hidden modes and viewing the ending FMV sequences.

Codes submitted by Dillion Merz

Irritating Stick



SEVEN LIVES:
Highlight the "1P Play" selection at the mode selection screen and press →→→→. Then, highlight the "Tournament" selection and press →. Then, highlight the "Course Edit" selection and press ←←. Then, highlight the "Option" selection and press ←←←←←←. Finally, highlight the "1P Play" selection again and press ✕. The sound of a cheer will confirm correct code entry.

Codes submitted by Rodrick Alberto

Send all code submissions to:

EXECUTE
Dimension Publishing
1175 Chess Drive, Suite E
Foster City, CA 94404
or email us at: **d3@quake.net**

GAME SHARK Codez

Welcome to the Game Shark section. Each month we'll list the newest and coolest codez right here for your cheat'n pleasure. Warning: These codes won't work without a Game Shark. For the latest codez and info, get on the internet and check www.gameshark.com, www.cmgsccc.com or www.datel.co.uk. If you find a code doesn't work, you may need to upgrade your Game Shark. Check your instruction manual for details.
(Most of these codes are unofficial and may not work correctly at all. Use at your own risk.)

```
APE ESCAPE (GameShark v3.1)
Infinite Health.....800EC2C8 00[illegible]5
Infinite Lives.....800F448C 0064
Infinite Air.....800F4DC8 0258
Only Need 1 Monkey.....800F44B6 0003
Max Gold Triangles.....800F44B8 0063
Timer is 0:00:00.....800F4490 0000
Have All Gadgets.....D00F51C4 0003
                     800F51C4 0[illegible]F
Enable Fossil Field 100%.....300DFC71 0002
Enable Primordial Ooze 100%.....300DFC72 0002
Enable Molten Lava 100%.....300DFC73 0002
Enable Thick Jungle 100%.....300DFC74 0002
Enable Dark Ruins 100%.....300DFC75 0002
Enable Cryptic Relics 100%.....300DFC76 0002
Enable Stadium Attack 100%.....300DFC77 0002
Enable Crabby Beach 100%.....300DFC78 0002
Enable Coral Cave 100%.....300DFC79 0002
Enable Dexter's Island 100%.....300DFC7A 0002
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Enable Frosty Retreat 100%.....300DFC7C 0002
Enable Hot Springs 100%.....300DFC7D 0002
Enable Gladiator Attack 100%.....300DFC7E 0002
Enable Sushi Temple 100%.....300DFC7F 0002
Enable Wabi Sabi Wall 100%.....300DFC80 0002
Enable Crumbling Castle 100%.....300DFC81 0002
Enable City Park 100%.....300DFC84 0002
Enable Spectar's Fact 100%.....300DFC85 0002
Enable TV Tower 100%.....300DFC86 0002
Enable Monkey Madness 100%.....300DFC88 0002
Enable Peak Point Mat 100%.....300DFC8E 0002
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                     801393F0 0001
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                     80139400 0001
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Infinite [illegible].....8007AB54 2400
Moon Jump.....D00E5478 0008
                     800EC23E 0000
With this code, press R1 for Moon Jump,
R2 for Normal Jump.
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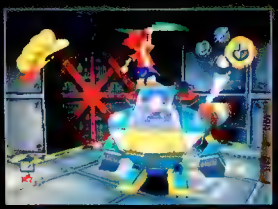

APE ESCAPE

You better get them before they get you.

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A DAY IN THE LIFE

Greg and I recently made our annual trek down to southern California to pay visits to Naughty Dog (Crash Team Racing) and Insomniac Games (Spyro 2: Ripto's Rage). In preparing to tell you about both of these new games, which we were able to spend some significant time playing, we thought it might be fun to give you a glimpse into the day of a video game journalist on the road. Ahhh... the glamour, the schmoozing, the plane delays... Check this out...

Sunday, June 20, 1999, 5:00 PM: After wishing my son Spencer a happy 9th birthday, I arrive at San Francisco International Airport — an airport that will truly never be finished. All of this new construction but still only one runway that can be used. Greg is already in So-Cal, having left earlier in the day. I meet Sony's Wendy Spander at the airport, where we proceed to wait as our flight has been delayed from its scheduled 6:00 PM departure. Wendy and I kill time talking about the truly awesome US Open men's golf tournament that was completed earlier in the day.

Naughty Dog founder, Morgan.

Sunday, June 20, 1999, 8:30 PM: We finally arrive in Los Angeles (another airport in a perpetual state of construction) and are met by Sony's Kirsten Merit. We head to Santa Monica and check into our hotel. Kirsten and Wendy wanted to go to a sushi place for dinner, but I had to squash that idea. Me and raw squid don't get jiggie wit' it. Instead, we hook up with Greg and head to Malibu and this great Tex-Mex place on the coast, Marix. We are joined by Ted Price and Alex Hastings of Insomniac Games; the two principals that founded the company. Between some mucho macho nachos and a couple of TASTE-T Cadillac Gold margaritas, we manage to talk about everything from games to small business management (bet you're sorry you weren't there to hear the ins and outs of Ted and I talking about labor and overhead management).

Sunday, June 20, 1999, 11:30 PM: We return to our hotel and hit the rack. Greg and I decide to hit the hotel gym at 7:00 AM, before we head out to see Naughty Dog. One small problem; A&E is covering the life and times of the Beach Boy's Brian Wilson.

Monday, June 21, 1999, 1:30 AM: I actually go to sleep, and drift off knowing that I understand the madness/genius that is Brian Wilson that much better — my thanks to Peter Graves.

Monday, June 21, 1999, 7:00 AM: The wake-up call comes at exactly 0-Too-Early and I meet Greg down in the lobby. At the gym, we run into Wendy, who is hitting the bike. Wendy is getting married in a few months and takes her workouts pretty seriously. Greg couldn't handle the weight, so I had to spot her on the bench. For Greg and I, it was a 30 minute bike ride and then some arm work. There was a chick on the treadmill checking us out.

We were greeted at the door.

Monday, June 21, 1999, 9:00 AM: Have you ever enjoyed a $12.00 vegetarian omelet? A $5.00 bagel? No? Then you haven't had the pleasure of hotel dining in La-La land. Greg and I grab a bite at the Fleece-and-Eat and meet Wendy for the drive to Naughty Dog.

Monday, June 21, 1999, 10:30 AM: We arrive at the Dog's Pound in Santa Monica. The Dogs are headquartered in a very cool office that overlooks the 3rd Street

Jason plays.

Promenade (an outdoor shopping area near the beach). We are met by Jason Rubin and Andy Gavin, ND's founding partners. After saying hello to some of the ND team members that we have gotten to know over the years, we plant ourselves at the big table and get the scoop on Crash Team Racing from Jason and Andy, and a few of the design team members. It is obvious from the first time we see the game that CTR is going to be the PlayStation's Mario Kart. The track design is consistent with the look and feel of the levels found in the Crash Bandicoot universe and the game's power-up system and play control give CTR an extremely high energy level. After getting the low-down, Greg and I are given controllers and we begin to compete in the two player, split-screen mode. Sadly, Greg was not up to the challenge and, four races later, he succumbed. However, he would have his revenge in four player mode. What a blast!

Monday, June 21, 1999, 2:30 PM: After four hours of playing and talking about CTR (and a decent barbecued chicken sandwich from Wolfgang Puck's), Greg and I agree that PSExtreme should feature Crash Team Racing on our October cover. Jason and Andy also seem to think this is a good idea. Of course, it might have been the free chicken talking, but we are pretty confident that the game can stand on its own merits. Oh, yeah... we also found out that ND is working on "Project X" for PlayStation 2. Unfortunately, part of the deal for the free chicken was that we sign an NDA on the game. Sorry, but I was hungry.

Monday, June 21, 1999, 3:30 PM: Greg and I arrive (late) at Insomniac's offices in Burbank and settle into some pretty heated Spyro 2 gameplay with Mark Cerny (President of Cerny Games and an instrumental part of the development team in all three Crash Bandicoots and the original Spyro) and Ted Price. This is one sequel that is loaded with gameplay improvements and depth. We spend the next three hours uncovering the gameplay basics and taking a tour of the environments to be found in Ripto's Rage. The game will feature 29 all-new levels and gameplay that focuses on completing primary and secondary tasks, as opposed to the basic collection gameplay of the original game. Spyro can now swim, climb, head-bash, spit, ice skate and hover and power-up his moves through the collection/spending of treasure. Ripto's Rage is a much bigger game than the original and will require many more hours to complete. Both Greg and I spent significant time with controller in hand and think that fans of the original are going to love the sequel. Although there were no food inducements, we felt that Spyro 2 was also worthy of gracing the cover of PSExtreme and we will bring you that feature in our November issue.

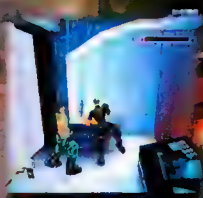
Monday, June 21, 1999, 7:00 PM: For Greg and I, it was back to the airport after saying our good-byes at Insomniac. This time around, we were actually able to catch an earlier flight that had been held — sometimes those darn delays work in your favor. A bag of pretzels, a tomato juice and a few winks later and we arrive back home. A day in the life of a couple of typical video game magazine guys — glamorous, exotic and subtly stimulating. Why work to play when you can play at work?

Dave

Greg and I would like to thank Wendy and Kirsten for taking point on our little excursion and the Naughty Dogs and the Sleepless Ones at Insomniac for making our road trip an enjoyable one. There is nothing better than seeing good people succeed and both of these small businesses deserve everything they have achieved. Stay tuned, over the next two months we'll give you all the goods on both games.

published by: Eidos
developed by: Core
percent complete: 75%
release: October

FIGHTING FORCE 2



I can remember we were pretty psyched when we first got a glimpse of the design docs for Core/Eidos' original Fighting Force. At that time, the concept of a 3D "Streets of Rage" sounded like a great idea. Unfortunately, sometimes what looks good on paper doesn't actually work in execution. The end result, while a reasonable success at retail, met with harsh criticism within the gaming press for it's simple, repetitive gameplay and the fact that it could be beaten in one sitting. With the advent of 32-bit technology, larger storage mediums and the ability to play games in 3D space, today's jaded gamers want and require more that just running from one area to the next while beating up on wave after wave of baddies. In fact, games like Core's own Tomb Raider are partly responsible for raising this bar. Recognizing the game for its faults and where it could have been better, the development team at Core went back to the drawing board and are currently in the process of endeavoring to deliver a more complex, immersive experience with the sequel, Fighting Force 2.

Here's the story: Dr. Zeng (the antagonist and all around bad guy from the original) has been defeated. After his attempt to destroy the world failed, Zeng and his followers vanished from Earth. His research foundation was sold off to the Nakamichi Corporation — a powerful and faceless organization overseeing a global business empire. Undiscovered in Fighting Force 1, Zeng had begun work on the ultimate soldier — a cyborg creation that, if marketed correctly, could make the Nakamichi Corporation a leader in the defense and space exploration industries. Recruited by the CIA's clandestine operations unit, Hawk Mason is once again called into action, this time to carry out the dangerous and deadly business of government espionage.

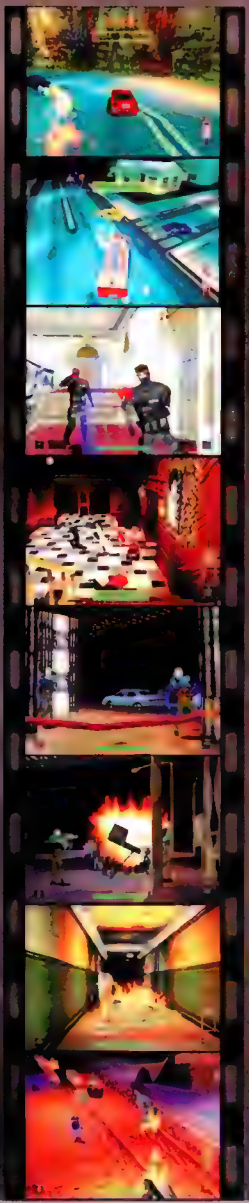
As Hawk Mason, you'll be asked to infiltrate the Nakamichi Corp. and successfully negotiate its complex R&D facilities. But, it's going to require more than brute strength this time around, as stealth, strategy and weapon management will all come into play. Oh, you'll still be able to unleash a barrage of punches, kicks, body slams and other muscle tearing, bone crunching moves, but using strategy and foresight will be the key to the success of your missions.

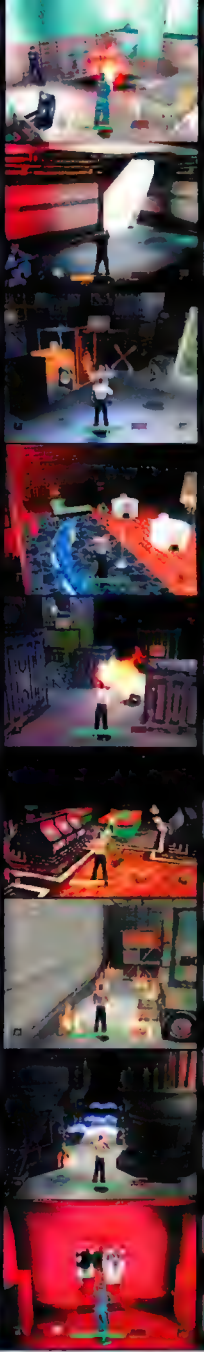
With a much more complex design concept, Core knew they were going to have to start from scratch. Fighting Force 2 will offer a host of new features, starting with a brand new 3D engine. In addition, the game will offer real-time character and object lighting, an advanced combat system — multiple impact points will allow varying character reactions and animations, heightened enemy AI — enemies have unique aptitude levels which allow them to "see" obstructions and use the environment to their tactical advantage, an integrated storyline — there will be character interaction and plot progression via in-game cut-scenes, and expansive 3D environments designed for interactive negotiation and strategic exploration.

As you can tell, Fighting Force 2 is shaping up to be a lot more than standard sequel fare (throw in some new enemies in a new environment, give the main character a few new moves and slap a 2 on the end of the title) and, if it continues on its current course, could be one of the surprise hits of the holiday season.

published by: Fox
developed by: n-Space
percent complete: 71.4%
release: November

DIE HARD TRILOGY 2





I've said it before and I'll say it again, the original Die Hard Trilogy still looks and plays well today. While the majority of the PlayStation's first generation titles are old and dated compared to today's releases, this game can still hold its own. Offering up three separate games in one package (3rd-person action, shooting and driving), Die Hard Trilogy chronicled the misadventures of policeman John McClane who, by pure happenstance, always seems to conveniently end up at the same place as a group of terrorists looking to rob the US blind.

Since the original was based on all three of the Die Hard movies, we never gave a sequel a second thought. Apparently, Fox Interactive did, and have been secretly hard at work with a follow up game for release this fall. Instead of recreating a new game using the old storylines from the film, Fox, along with new developers n-Space (the original was developed by Probe), have created an all-new storyline for the sequel, while keeping with the basic game design from the first. The story is set among the neon lights and arid desert landscape of Las Vegas, where Lt. McClane is taking some much needed R&R (this business of taking out terrorists can be taxing on the body). While in town visiting his old friend, Kenny Sinclair, McClane stumbles across a diabolical plot masterminded by (who else) a multi-national group of terrorists with the means of wiping Tacky Town off the map if their demands are not met. Once again, it's up to one cop with the odds stacked against him, to thwart this new legion of no-good terrorists in a race against time.

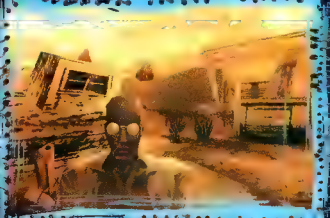
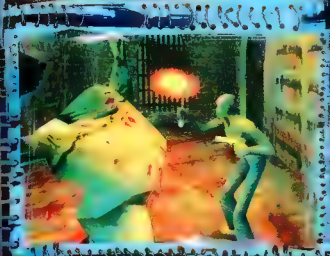
As with the original Die Hard Trilogy, part two will feature three different game engines in one game. Taking it one step further, Fox has implemented two modes in this game: Movie and Arcade. In the new Movie mode, players will be given the chance to play through a story-driven adventure that seamlessly combines the three genre styles into one cohesive action game. Alternatively, the Arcade mode will be similar to the first Die Hard Trilogy, where you can choose to play each of the games separately. Either way, as with the first, Fox is striving to give players a lot of bang for their buck.

At this point, we were only able to play one early version of the game for just a few minutes back in May at E3. Our impressions from the quick look we had are that the developers are on the right track. While not straying too far from the look and feel of the original, the sequel will offer new and advanced 3D engines for all three of the different games. In addition, the game features more in-depth gameplay – the third person action sequences are much deeper than the first, with stealth elements and light puzzle solving, advanced enemy AI – the enemies react to your actions, adding an unpredictable feel to the game, new graphical effects – shading, color cycling, pyrotechnics, etc., and the return of the voice actor who convinced all of us that it was Bruce Willis who dubbed the first. Of course, the game will be Dual Shock and analog compatible, and will allow use of both standard and Guncon light guns.

He is coming.
Walking between worlds...
Traveling the road of souls from Liveside to Deadside
And back again.
A dead man is coming, skull in one hand,
flambeau in the other...
a voodoo mask in his chest
and lines of power in his back.

A possessed man is coming,
stalking evil in tenements and deserts,
subways and swamps,
spirit world and real world.

Shadowman is coming...
To stop the Apocalypse.
To save your soul.

SHADOW MAN™

Walk on the Deadside

Warning:
This game
is recommended for
mature audiences only.
It contains adult content.

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

NINTENDO 64

PC CD-ROM

PlayStation

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TOMB RAIDER
THE LAST REVELATION

After last year's Tomb Raider III, the vivacious, busty and typically ubiquitous Lara Croft took a bit of a sabbatical and went into seclusion for a bit. Being a no-show at E3 this year (except for the few, privileged members of the press who, under strict NDA, got to see an early glimpse behind closed doors), there was some speculation that there might not be yet another PlayStation sequel to this long-running series. Whether it was due to Eidos' fear of overexposing the character (now there's a good setup for a boob joke), or maybe they didn't want to show the game too early (a rushed and very dark demo of TR III was shown the year before at E3, and received its share of negative press because of it), Tomb Raider IV was decidedly held back from being announced as a release for this holiday season. Finally, Eidos has decided to let the first few screens and information about the game out to the gaming public. While there's not much information to talk about yet (there are certain cool things we know about the game that Eidos has asked us not to reveal at this time), there are some new features we can talk about.

For starters, the title of the game is officially: Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation, which leads us to believe that it will be the last Tomb Raider game (at least on the 32-bit PlayStation) featuring Lara Croft in an Indiana Jones-style adventure. The release date falls into the same month and time frame as the past Tomb Raiders — sometime in and around November of this year (most likely hitting shelves the all-important Thanksgiving shopping weekend). The development team working on the game is comprised of members from the past three Tomb Raiders (Core) and, once again, they have re-worked the graphic engine. Expect a much

cleaner looking environment (the last, even though it was in high-res, was a texturemapped mess) that will continually stream the levels of the CD, thus eliminating load times. In addition, Lara herself has been re-modeled and is now showing off single skin technology (no visible polygon "joints"). Instead of offering a quest that takes place in a variety of locales, TR IV will take place in one location — Egypt. Some of the other new features in the game will be all new puzzle mechanics (much more reminiscent of the first game), a new interface and inventory system, new moves and costumes (of course), and an easier difficulty level (some complained that part three was too hard).

Unfortunately, that's all we have to offer up at this point. See this month's EXcerpt section for a few more details and stay tuned to these pages as more info becomes available.

Greg

EXclusive

SPOTLIGHT ON

ELECTRONIC ARTS™

Some of you youngin's might think EA got its start in the video game scene with their mega-successful sports franchises on 16-bit consoles. Well boys and girls, that's not exactly the case... sports games haven't always been the company's bread and butter. In fact, this old-timer can remember a day when he would insert the latest 5 1/4 inch floppy into Drive A on his ol' reliable Apple II+, enter the catalog command, and "run" some of their most cutting-edge stuff – Pinball Construction Set, Archon, Standing Stones, Hard Hat Mack and M.U.L.E. – to name just a few.

While EA has certainly solidified its foundation (and just about monopolized the sports genre) with long-running series, such as Madden, FIFA, NHL, Triple Play and NBA Live, they have also enjoyed some success with a slew of entertainment titles. It's true, in the past their PlayStation entertainment line-up hasn't exactly set the charts on fire (as witnessed with ReBoot, Skull Monkeys, Overblood, Rushdown, Auto Destruct, Viewpoint, Future Cop: LAPD, Wing Commander III, Psychic Detective, Street Sk8ter, Small Soldiers, Space Hulk, etc., etc.), there have been some shining moments (the Need for Speed series, Road Rash). The remainder of this year, in my opinion, is going to reveal, once and for all, that EA knows much more than sports.

by Greg

Hot Wheels Turbo Racing

Fall '99

Duh! One has to wonder why no one else snapped up this license years ago. Well, EA figured it out and has been working on "Hot Wheels Turbo Racing" for the PlayStation over the last year-and-a-half.

Get ready to feel the adrenaline rush of simultaneously being in and out of control, as you get behind the wheel of some of the most popular Hot Wheels cars of all time and compete against others via stunts, speed or just plain crashing them off the course.

Hot Wheels looks to do justice to the license. The game will feature a total of 40 of the all-time coolest Hot Wheels cars, including the time-honored Red Baron, Twin Mill, Mongoose, Jet Threat and Cat-A-Pult. All of these cars have their own unique racing style and attributes, and can be raced on open roads, as well as some of the classic Hot Wheels tracks set in four fantasy environments – Wild West, Glacial Rift, Haunted Highway and Volcano Island. Wanting to capture the fun and imagination we've all felt while running these cars along walls, down stairs or flinging them through the tracks, EA has not only re-created such favorites as the loop-the-loop, criss-cross, danger changer and plenty of harrowing ramps, jumps and half pipes, but they've also added a unique stunt mechanic that lets players execute wild mid-air spins, 360°s, barrel rolls and end-over-end flips. In addition to a great 3D engine, Hot Wheels Turbo Racing will feature two player, head-to-head racing, secret short-cuts, a wide array of power-ups, hidden cars to uncover and a music sound track featuring songs from Mix Master Mike, Rev. Horton Heat, Meat Beat Manifesto, Primus and Metallica.

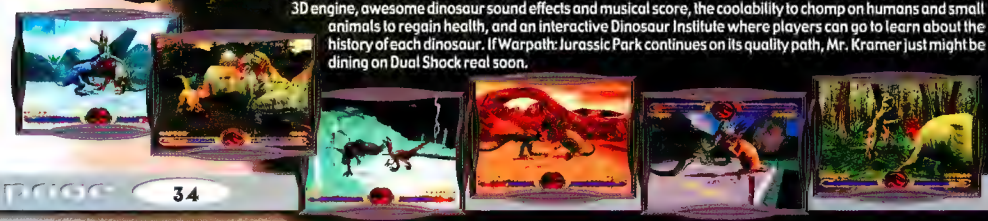
Warpath: Jurassic Park

Fall '99

"Warpath: Jurassic Park" takes every kid's dream of playing with Dinosaurs to the extreme. As a 3D fighting game featuring the savage dinosaurs from the world of Jurassic Park, Warpath is set to deliver some ferocious animal combat. Players will have the opportunity to choose from 14 of the movies' predators and fight to the bloody end, in ten unique arenas modeled after locations from both Jurassic Park and The Lost World.

Warpath's gameplay definitely exercises Darwin's theory of Natural Selection, as it's survival of the fittest. Each of the game's dinos (which include the mighty T-Rex, Velociraptor, Triceratops, Mega Raptor, Suchomimus and Gigantosaurus) will have an arsenal of moves at their disposal, including flesh-ripping bites, snaps, claw rakes, grabs, combos, reversals and slams. As the brutal carnage ensues, the dinos will show wear-and-tear, with real-time wounding effects and plenty of blood.

Warpath will have the usual array of fighting modes found in most of today's popular fighters, while offering some unique features, such as a Blood Rage mode, where players are awarded with secret attack moves as they become experts at the various fighting sequences. In addition to this, the game sports a great-looking 3D engine, awesome dinosaur sound effects and musical score, the coolability to chomp on humans and small animals to regain health, and an interactive Dinosaur Institute where players can go to learn about the history of each dinosaur. If Warpath: Jurassic Park continues on its quality path, Mr. Kramer just might be dining on Dual Shock real soon.



Fall '99

MEDAL OF HONOR

Recently, EA held a gamer's day for the press and showcased all of these titles you see here. Unfortunately, at the time, we were on deadline with the August issue and Eric went in my place. I can't even tell you how disappointed I was when he came back raving about DreamWorks' "Medal of Honor" – a game EA purposefully held off showing at E3 because they knew it deserved special treatment. Thankfully, they were sympathetic to my plight (or maybe they just couldn't tolerate my whining) and had me come in to see their line-up on "Greg Off Day". In any event, I got to experience the coolness that is Medal of Honor – the first World War II-themed action/adventure title developed specifically for the PlayStation.

This FPS was inspired by Spielberg and tells the dramatic tale of an agent in the OSS (Office of Strategic Services – the United States' wartime spy and covert operations agency) who aids the Allied Forces in an effort to thwart the German takeover of Europe. Historically accurate down to the most minute detail, Honor reflects the realism of the WWII era. In order to maintain this high degree of accuracy, DreamWorks brought Capt. Dale Dye, USMC on board, who happens to be the top military consultant to the entertainment industry (he consulted and contributed to such films as Saving Private Ryan, Platoon and Born on the Fourth of July). According to EA, Dye has worked closely with Honor's development team and has brought his invaluable expertise and information to the game by defining characters, developing missions and helping to model accurate 3D versions of over 15 different weapons from the time period.

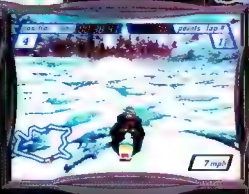
Here's a brief list of features: A special "Disguise" mode that allows players to put on enemy uniforms and move unnoticed through German encampments; an array of distinctive sound effects, including voice and radio communications to help fully draw the player into the historic wartime atmosphere; unbelievable character reaction, animation and AI – enemies will react differently dependant on where you shoot them, as well as duck behind walls for cover and pick up or kick back your own grenades; an original music soundtrack, a bevy of two player modes, including head-to-head, co-operative and a cool version of "Hot Potato" (with a live grenade); and, lastly, actual WWII film footage to tie in the historical story and immerse the player in the era. Trust me, this is one game you'll want to keep on your radar.

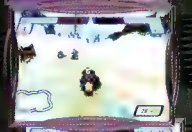
Summer '99

SLED STORM

A reviewable version of "Sled Storm" came in just as we were putting the finishing touches on this article. While you'll have to wait for the review next issue, I can editorialize a little bit and tell you this game is very fun, very fast and very cool.

Sled Storm lets you experience the power (and insanity) of racing extreme snowmobiles through a gauntlet of treacherous alpine terrain. A first of its kind (can anyone think of a snowmobile racing game on any platform?), the game takes its roots from the growing popularity of extreme snowmobiling (the only reason to watch ESPN2) and SnoCross, a relatively new sport that takes tricks and terrain from Motocross racing and puts it on snow.





Similar in some respects to Sony/989's Jet Moto series, Storm combines intense and aggressive off road racing with pulling off big air tricks and stunts for points (which can be used to upgrade and customize your sled).

Sled Storm offers up a total of 14 tracks on which to race (six are SnoCross and the other eight are "Open Mountain"), each featuring a variety of snowy terrain with well-hidden short cuts and chutes to help you gain the upper-hand. Adding to the already white-knuckle feeling from the fast pace, you'll have to contend with realistic vehicle physics and a group of relentless and ruthless competitors. Expect your sled to respond differently to the changing terrain – skidding across ice, bogging down in the mud and even blasting through thick snowdrifts – while you use your brawn and your vehicle to knock opponents off their sleds or be knocked off yourself.

How about a list of features? A tight, seamless and fast 3D engine (this is EA Canada we're talking about); dynamic environmental conditions, such as driving snow, heavy fog and night courses; over 50 tricks and combinations to attempt and pull off, including Superman airs, Heel Clickers and Decades; tons of shortcuts and hidden pathways to uncover; a roster of six different characters from which to choose, each with their own attitude, unique trick set and verbal taunts; and two and four-way spilt-screen multiplayer options. We'll have the full review in next month's issue.

Winter '99

007 Tomorrow Never Dies

"Tomorrow Never Dies", should have been titled "Tomorrow Never Comes", as this title has been frequently delayed and delayed again for the past couple of years. While coming really close to the finishing line, it seems like there still is a bit of work to be done. Currently, the latest release date is falling somewhere in the October category – we're keeping our fingers crossed that this date will hold.

You're probably wondering what's new with this title since the last time we reported on it. Well, for starters, the multiplayer mode has been left on the cutting room floor. In an attempt to get the game finished before the holiday season, the two player mode was axed so the team can spend more time on polish and quality control. While a definite disappointment, it's something we can live with if the final product is up to snuff. I did have a chance to see the driving sequences (for those of you who haven't been following the game's progress, in addition to the third-person action/shooting sequences, Tomorrow Never Dies will feature both skiing and driving sequences) and they seamlessly transition from the action portions of the game. These driving segments feature the heavily weaponed and armored BMW 750 from the movie and have James racing it out against an array of baddies to make it from one locale to the next in one piece.

In an attempt to stay true to the Bond legacy, Tomorrow Never Dies will feature the ability to use and implement over a dozen fully interactive gadgets and weapons – exploding cufflink detonators, laser designators, microscopic tracking devices, ski pole rocket launchers and satellite up-link cameras, as well as an array of traditional military weapons – sniper rifles, infra-red goggles, etc., over ten missions based on the movie of the same name. Some of the familiar locations include the Military Outpost, Arms Bazaar, Carver Media Center, Hotel Atlantic and the Stealth Boat in Ha Long Bay. The game has an impressive list of other features (see the last few issues for the complete scoop) which sound impressive, but we'll wait to comment on these until the game is complete.

We'll keep on eye on Tomorrow Never Dies' progress during the next few months and will return, hopefully soon, with the game's review.

Summer '99

WCW Mayhem

While not quite officially a sport (wrestling is definitely more a form of entertainment than competition – IMHO), EA's maiden "WCW Mayhem" is set to bring the out-of-control, in-your-face action from the ring to your PlayStation. Based on the world of World of Championship Wrestling and its line of high-profile wrestlers, Mayhem is ready to Super Suplex you with an immersive wrestling experience that authentically (no such word in wrestling) recreates the high-energy, adrenaline pumping action of popular WCW events.

Over 50 WCW wrestlers will be featured in the game, including such favorites as Hollywood Hogan, Goldberg, Kevin Nash, Bam Bam Bigelow, Diamond Dallas Page and Sting. Each of these characters will have their own unique set of signature moves (over 600 were motion captured for the game), including taunts, finishing moves and ring entrances. In addition, taking a page from Acclaim and their line of WWF titles, players will also be able to create their own wrestlers to take into the ring, determining all of their wrestler's characteristics, including his/her name, which will be announced by the play-by-play when entering the ring.

Speaking of play-by-play, this is one area where Mayhem outdoes the competition. The game features color commentary and surprisingly accurate play-by-play from a trio of veteran wrestling commentators – Tony Schiavone, Bobby Heenan and Mean Gene Okurlund. Other features and options include intuitive controls, a dynamic in-game camera system that changes intuitively, dependant on where your wrestler is in and out of the ring, authentic music, pyrotechnics, sights and sounds – crowds react accordingly to their favorite wrestler – cheering, booing and chanting dependant how the match is going, all sorts of Pay-Per-View events with their corresponding 3D sets and rings, and the ability to take the action out of the ring and into the backstage, where you'll battle it out in bathrooms, parking lots, locker rooms, etc., while viewed through security cameras. Acclaim and THQ better watch out, a new contender has entered the ring.

Fall '99

XENA
WARRIOR PRINCESS

If you're an avid gamer and follow all of the goings-on in our crazy industry, then you might remember that "Xena: Warrior Princess" was, at one time in the recent past, going to be published by 989 Studios. Weary of the press' initial reaction to the game, 989 decided to pass on the project, leaving it ripe for the picking. Well, EA picked up the game (which, is obviously based on the mega-popular TV show) and have put a lot of time and effort in polishing the final product. While not quite finished, we were able to get a playable version, and have spent some time kicking a lot of medieval buttock. Our impressions are that the game has actually come together pretty nicely and might just be a grade A product.

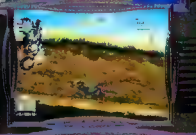
In Xena, players will be given the chance to be the ultimate mythological heroine and fight through epic adventures and non-stop action. Featuring numerous elements from the TV show, fans can expect to see familiar locations and faces, including Gabrielle, Ares and Hades. Additionally, the game will also introduce several new characters (created specifically for the game), such as an evil sorceress named Kalabrax and a flock of Amazon Bird Women.

While Xena leans decidedly toward hand-to-hand combat, there is a fair share of exploration and puzzle solving to be had. Expect seven enormous worlds that encompass over 20 levels, including multiple secret levels and hidden characters that are revealed as you progress through the game. Each level is mission-based, giving Xena more to do than just bludgeon her enemies with her fists. In an early level, you have to save hostages who will be killed if you don't get to their assailants on time. Another has you battling a huge, bolder-throwing cyclops who you have to pry his fingers off a ledge of a cliff in order to defeat him.

As of now, Xena looks like it's shaping up nicely. The game has a colorful and solid 3D engine, an array of enemies to encounter and fight (including dragons, dryads, golems and serpents), a host of signature moves (back flips, bicycle kicks and 360° splits), special powers and weapons (sword, staff and Chakram) with which to fight, and sound effects and music taken directly from the show.

Q1 '99

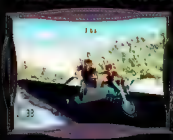
ROAD RASH
UNCHAINED



We know we promised a feature on "Road Rash Unchained" a few issues back, but there hasn't been a whole lot available to report on until now. In fact, the game has recently been pushed back, possibly until the beginning of next year. This new iteration of the popular series, which has been going since the early days of the Sega Genesis, brings back the lawless, anything goes, high-speed motorcycle combat we all know and love, with a vengeance. This year's model promises a host of new options and features which will hopefully shift the game into high gear, while not leaving fans of the series back at the starting line.

In Unchained, players will be able to compete in three new multiplayer modes: a unique and possibly cool co-operative side car mode – where the driver focuses on steering while player two fights off challengers with a collection of weapons, a split-screen competition mode – where two players will duel against each other and a full grid of racers to make it to the finish line first, and a pursuit mode – where you get to be the cop and bring down your own brand of justice.

In addition to the new multiplayer modes, Unchained has also undergone a graphic overhaul, completely cleaning up its act from last year's 3D attempt. Expect much cleaner textures, faster frame rates, all new animations, cool special effects (polygon shadows, shading, real-time lighting, lens flares) and new locations to race through. This time around, the game will feature three different geographic regions – Urban, Alpine and Desert – while still keeping to the "open road" engine developed for last year's game.



Some of the other added features/improvements include new moves and fight animations – the game will now allow combination moves and super punches by executing a combination of buttons and d-pad presses in quick succession; two distinct gangs (vs. the four from RR3D), and a total of 12 weapons to make use of, including the old standbys: chains, clubs, pipes, crowbars, cattleprods and stunguns. We promise we'll have plenty more coverage on Road Rash Unchained, as soon as EA will let us get our greedy hands on a playable version.

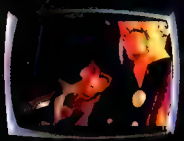
SPOTLIGHT ON

ACTIVISION

Activision might have missed a few steps when they first entered into the PlayStation console arena, but they eventually hit their full stride and have, in the past few years, really made a name for themselves with today's jaded gamers. As one of the oldest game companies around, there's no arguing they know how to weather the ups and down of the video game industry; making themselves a success on just about every platform (including PC, N64 and, potentially, the soon-to-be-released Dreamcast). While last year's PlayStation lineup had some pretty fantastic games (Vigilante 8, Tenchu, Guardian's Crusade), there were also a few bad apples (Apocalypse, Pitfall 3D). With this year's lineup, they have brought out the big guns (quite literally), and have a group of games, being released between now and December, that are guaranteed to make your jaw drop in awe, stir up some controversy, make some noise (that will be you hooping and hollering when you pull off a killer trick in Tony Hawk), garner plenty of critical press, and provide you with some serious entertainment value.

by Greg

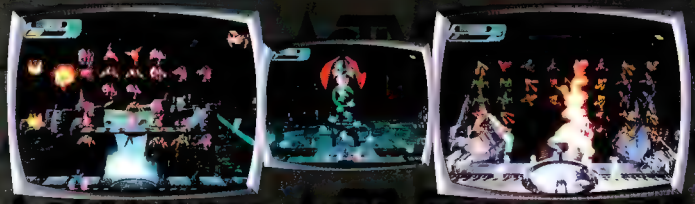
VIGILANTE 8 2ND OFFENSE

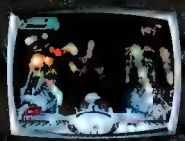


In the battle between car combat games, Activision's Vigilante 8 was the clear winner in 1998. As a result of the split between Single Trac and Sony, and 989 Studios taking over the Twisted Metal 3 franchise, it was a three horse race to the finish between Twisted Metal 3, Rogue Trip and V8. Rogue Trip had Singletrac and the gameplay, but lost the Sony marketing muscle. Twisted Metal 3 took a step back and lost some of the charm of the first two. Then, there was V8, courtesy of developer Luxoflux. Vigilante 8 gave players some cool twists on the TM gameplay with a great graphic engine that was more detailed than that offered by the other two games. V8 became the critical darling and ended up doing very well at retail.

Boy, how things change in a year. Twisted Metal 4 may or may not make an appearance this holiday season and GT Interactive has all but disappeared, taking Single Trac and a Rogue Trip sequel with them (rumor has it that there IS going to be one, but we haven't seen anything on it yet). V8-2 has the market all to itself and the game is looking good. V8-2 offers 12 all-new destructible battle arenas, spread out across the US. There are a total of 18 characters in the game, ten new ones and eight carryovers from the original game. Players can now switch on the fly between an in-the-cockpit view and the standard third-person vantage point and there are a number of hidden and bonus areas, cars and weapons. Of course, almost every object in the game can be blown to bits and they look good doing it! We were able to play an early build of the game just before going to press and we can safely say that V8-2 looks very impressive. The graphic engine has received quite a bit of tweaking, with a number of new effects, like environmental mapping and some pretty cool water. In addition, we were able to uncover a few power-ups, like the ability to change your vehicle into a hover car, that add some unique twists to the gameplay. In addition, the PlayStation version of the game supports a two player, split-screen mode. Car combat fans will want to keep an eye out for this one.

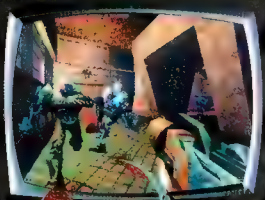
SPACE INVADERS

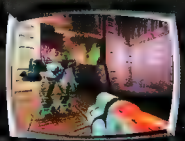




Not wanting to let Hasbro have all the retro-success (and the licenses), Activision is continuing along with its next revamped retro title. Like Asteroids before it, Space Invaders takes the popular game from the early '80's and gives it a graphical and gameplay facelift for the '90's. While not messing too much with the original's addicting formula – players still take aim from inside a land-based tank and dodge and attack wave after wave of aliens intent on world invasion – this new version of Space Invaders features immersive 3D worlds, innovative, polygonal 3D graphics, stunning special effects, explosive weapons and cool cinematic cut-scenes. In addition, the game features a new and innovative power-up system that adds a whole new element of strategy to the game. During gameplay, your ship will build up a special weapon meter dependent on shooting same-colored aliens. Once the meter has filled all the way up, you will be able to let loose with a variety of different shots. Depending on which color you collected, some will take out a whole vertical row of aliens in one blast, while others will hit one enemy then careen sideways or diagonally. There are over 20 different enemies to contend with, as well as huge bosses after every ten levels.

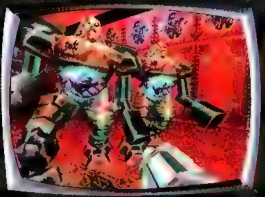
QUAKE II

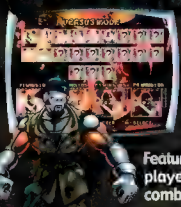




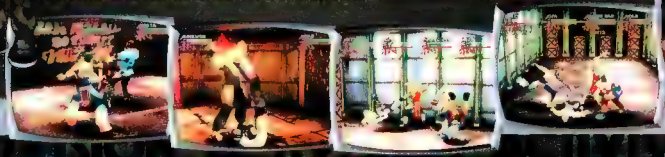
The PlayStation hasn't been very kind to the first-person shooter. While their have been some shining moments (Disruptor, Power Slave), the majority have been poor PC ports that suffer from tremendous pixelization and choking frame rates (Doom, Dark Forces, Duke Nukem). Thankfully, Activision and id Software have taken the high road and, instead of rushing out a quick-and-dirty port of the hugely successful PC version of Quake II, they have opted to take their time, focusing on making it the best it can possibly be with what the PlayStation hardware has to offer. The result is pretty fantastic. Boasting an amazing 3D engine running at super smooth and super fast frame rates, Quake II looks and plays like a banshee.

When all is said and done (the game is going through its final tweaking stages and should be shipping in the next few months), the PS version of Quake II will offer a list of impressive features, which include 20 mission-based levels (some PlayStation-exclusive), dumfounding, multi-player Deathmatch modes that allow up to four players to compete simultaneously via quad-screen, without loss of detail or frame rate, new Deathmatch levels specifically created for the PlayStation version, the ability to configure and tweak the controls to your liking, both Dual Shock and analog support, and an array of graphic special effects. Along with EA's Medal of Honor, Quake II is already a contender for best first-person shooter of the year.

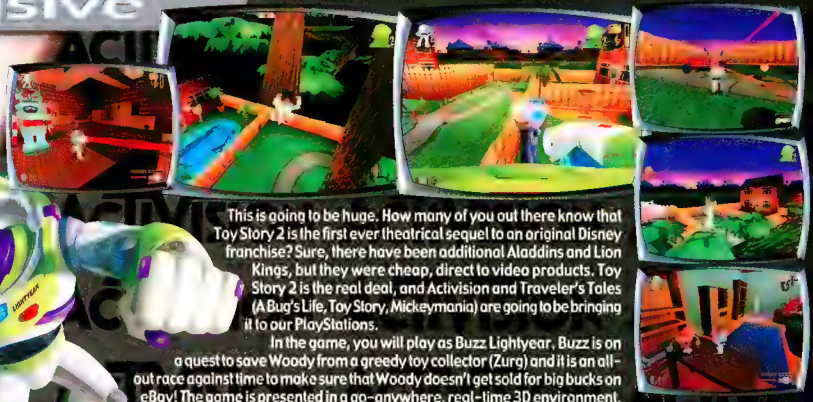




While EA may have put the kabosh on Virgin's Thrill-Kill when they took over the company's last few games, the engine lives on. Wu Tang: Shaolin Style, developed by Paradox (the Thrill Kill team), takes the brutal, every-man-for-himself, four-player fighting action from Thrill Kill and infuses it with the larger-than-life, kung-fu-inspired, hip-hop performers of the Wu Tang Clan. Marking the first time an original video game property has been designed specifically for a rap group, the game – an arena-based, 3D fighter – allows players to assume the role of one of the nine Wu Tang members (including RZA, Ol' Dirty Bastard and Method Man). Featuring a revolutionary four-player simultaneous 3D fighting engine, Wu Tang challenges players to master the art of kung-fu fighting with an arsenal of attack moves, multi-hit combos, taunts, fatality kills and counterattacks. Expect a variety of game modes (training, versus, story), ten different urban environments/arenas (from the streets of Staten Island to a Shaolin temple in China) and plenty of hip-hop music, Wu Tang-style (featuring three exclusive Wu Tang tracks made just for the game that you can play in your CD player). Currently, Wu Tang is scheduled for a fall release.



TOY STORY 2



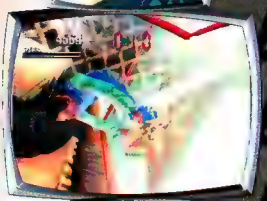
This is going to be huge. How many of you out there know that Toy Story 2 is the first ever theatrical sequel to an original Disney franchise? Sure, there have been additional Aladdins and Lion Kings, but they were cheap, direct to video products. Toy Story 2 is the real deal, and Activision and Traveler's Tales (A Bug's Life, Toy Story, Mickeymania) are going to be bringing it to our PlayStations.

In the game, you will play as Buzz Lightyear. Buzz is on a quest to save Woody from a greedy toy collector (Zurg) and it is an all-out race against time to make sure that Woody doesn't get sold for big bucks on eBay! The game is presented in a go-anywhere, real-time 3D environment. Buzz will have the ability to use lasers, whirling torso spins, jump, swing, bounce and somersault through the air. Plus, he has the ability to combine these moves in succession, as in the movie.

Buzz can also gain special powers by unlocking toy accessories, including: rocket jet boots, a grappling hook, an arm laser and moon spring boots. In addition, Hamm, Slinky and Rex are available to aid Buzz in his search. There are 15 levels in all, including five boss battles – the final one featuring a confrontation between Buzz and Zurg.

The movie is scheduled for a Thanksgiving release and you can expect to see the game at the same time. After playing it for a little bit at E3, we are very excited about Toy Story 2's potential. Traveler's Tales have always been known for the quality of their 3D engines and they have a pretty strong track record at making quality, Disney-licensed games. We'll file another report once we have some hands-on time.

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER

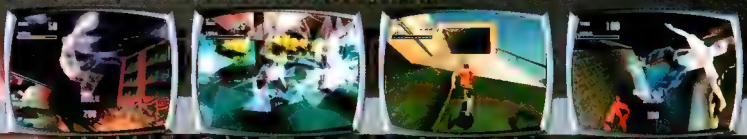


At this point, the only way for Tony Hawk Pro Skater not be one of the best games of the year (not to mention one of the single best skateboarding games ever) is for Activision to turn the game into a real-time skateboarding strategy game. Even at this early stage, with about three months left of development, Tony Hawk is one of the most playable games to ever be loaded into our PlayStations.

Neversoft and Activision have both been really good about listening to feedback from players (including the gaming press and Tony Hawk himself) who have played early versions of the game and tweaks both major and minor have already been incorporated.

The control of the game is coming along really well, also. Having played three different iterations of the game now, we are amazed with how well the riders handle; whether skating, jumping or performing intense displays of aerial kookiness. Grabs and grinds are easy to perform and link together, and the stunts make you sit back and say, "Coooooool." Analog control continues to prove itself to be the biggest boon to console gaming in a long time, as you really feel connected to your skater and the overall environment, while zipping through the parks, schools and warehouses.

Neversoft's 3D has to be seen to be believed. Tony Hawk is so fast that it's bordering on being too fast to be playable. Fortunately, the designers have gone right up to the edge of playability without crossing over. That this game can move so quickly while looking so good is amazing in and of itself. This is, far and away, one of the finest looking PlayStation games in quite some time, with tons of little touches to make it even more realistic. Greg pointed out that the shadows that follow your rider are "real," not the cop-out black circles locked underfoot that you find in most 3D video games. Another new addition are the squirts of blood that will hose out of your skater's melon when you impact the ground face first. We're not talking Mortal Kombat-style blood fountains, but just enough crimson to let you know that missing that landing wasn't such a great idea.



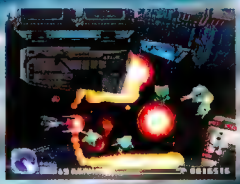
THE LEGEND RETURNS IN 3D!

The legendary series that set the standard is back! R-Type Delta returns with more of the frantic finger pounding excitement everyone expects from the R-Type series. Get ready for cool new weapons, more fiendishly clever levels, outrageous enemies, and all new 3D graphics designed exclusively for the PlayStation. This is the game that shooter fans everywhere have been raving about, so get that trigger finger ready and check out R-Type Delta.

- All new 3D graphics for the PlayStation
- Dual Shock Compatible
- 4 ships plus a hidden ship
- 7 levels of frantic trigger finger frenzy
- Top scorers can post and compare scores on the Agetec R-Type Delta Web site

"You simply must buy this game!"
-Electronic Gaming Monthly

"...possibly the best R-Type yet!"
-PSM



"Awesome original level design, enemies and bosses"
-Official PlayStation Magazine

agetec
ASCII GAME ENTERTAINMENT TECHNOLOGY

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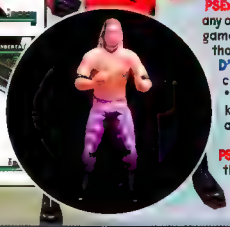
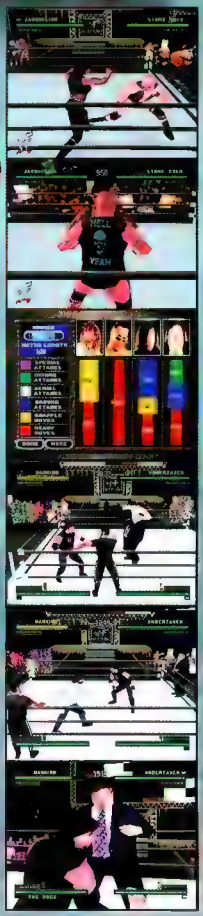




Acclaim's WWF Warzone is easily the best wrestling game to grace the Sony PlayStation. THQ's WCW/nWo series has come close, but no wrestling game has threatened Warzone's title belt – until now. Acclaim is about to release WWF Attitude, the sequel to Warzone and it looks to be even better than its predecessor.

In order to get the inside scoop on the game, we infiltrated the ranks of the World Wrestling Federation itself and managed to snag a few minutes with D'Lo Brown. D'Lo is one of the featured wrestlers in Attitude, as well as a big PlayStation fan. He was more than happy to fill us in on the details surrounding his involvement with Attitude and his opinion on the new game.

PSEx: How did you get involved with WWF Attitude?

D'Lo: It's an extension of Warzone from last year. They wanted to put my character in this year's version of the game. [ed note – D'Lo was not in Warzone] I just try and give every piece of advice and help I can to make Attitude the best wrestling game ever.

PSEx: So, it's safe to say that you're a fan of Warzone then?

D'Lo: Oh yeah, a big fan of Warzone. I thought Warzone was revolutionary with the "create-a-wrestler" mode and the ability to just work your way up in the championship chain. It started with a really good game, but by far Attitude will just blow that out of the water. I thought Warzone was a great game until I saw Attitude. I was out in San Francisco testing one of the early versions of Attitude and that early version was better than Warzone, so I can only imagine what the final product is going to be like. I mean, just some of the things that they were telling me they were going to put in there, I can't wait to play it.

PSEx: Have you played any of the WCW wrestling games? Any opinion on those?

D'Lo: Uh, I won't comment on that. *laughing* I think you know my answer already.

PSEx: Who are some of the more creative "create-a-wrestler" characters that you guys have come up with?

D'Lo: When you do a lot of independent wrestling in smaller federations, you start making people like that, but we also made up AndrÉ the Giant and we made up old Hulk Hogan. Mostly a lot of people from old Memphis places, a lot of small guys that no one would really understand except for the boys. But if you sit there long enough, even with Warzone you could make almost anybody.

PSEx: Did you ever put yourself into Warzone?

D'Lo: I put myself in there all the time.

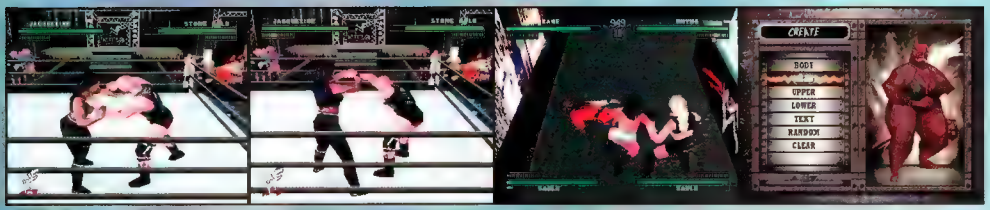
PSEx: So, what kind of involvement did you have in the creation of the game? Was it just motion-capture?

D'Lo: Motion-capture, voice-overs, you know getting your voice and catch phrases on tape, getting certain movements, every person makes their own little certain movements, stuff like that. Other than that, I talked to Mike Archer [ed note – Mike Archer is the producer of WWF Attitude] about certain ideas I had. Things like the weapons match now will have tables and stuff in the ring, as opposed to out on the floor. I know my favorite part of Warzone was trying to throw people through the table on the floor. Now it's a lot easier, because the tables will be in the ring.

PSEx: How would you say the wrestling games, like Warzone and Attitude, compare to the actual wrestling events? As a wrestler, how different is playing the game, versus actually stepping into the ring?

D'Lo: Well, other than the big adrenaline rush of 20,000 people, the video game comes pretty close to the motion. I mean, it looks like you are looking at a live event on TV. To me it's just as close as watching it every Monday night. But you have the ability to control the guys and control what they do. Like I said, other than the adrenaline rush, the video game comes pretty close.

PSEx: What about yourself? How did you get started with the WWF? How long have you been



a wrestler?

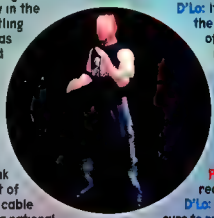
D'Lo: I've been wrestling for the World Wrestling Federation now for two and a half years. I got started completely by accident. I was at a gym working out one day and a guy came up to me and said, "Hey, you're a pretty big guy. You ever think about wrestling?" and I said, "Man, leave me alone. That's BS. Don't even bring it to me." He kept on me and on me and, after about a month, he finally got me going up to a wrestling gym. I just fell in love with it and I've been doing it ever since. I went down and wrestled in small territories in Tennessee and out in the Midwest in Indiana, Chicago and Ohio. I wrestled down in Puerto Rico for awhile. Finally, I got the call to come to the World Wrestling Federation.

PSEx: What about video games? We're told that you're quite the player. How long have you been a gamer?

D'Lo: I have been a gamer my entire life, from the Atari 2600. Going back to saving up all my quarters to go down to the local pizza parlor and play Asteroids, you know? I've just been a gamer my entire life. To me it was such a rush. I mean I was a little disappointed that I wasn't in Warzone, but then when I found out they wanted me in Attitude — oh, it was like a kid's dream come true. It's so hard to explain when you know you're going to be in a video game. I didn't even realize what I was doing until I was standing there posing for the action footage. Standing there and realizing that this image is going to be in a video game and people are going to play it. That was just awe inspiring.

PSEx: You mentioned that you weren't in the original Warzone. How did you get selected for Attitude? Did you approach Acclaim? Did they approach you? How did the selection process work?

D'Lo: Acclaim approached those they wanted in the game. The World Wrestling Federation said we'd like to have this guy, this guy and this guy in the game and then Acclaim said OK, can we have this guy, this guy and this guy in the game. It was a give and take process between the World Wrestling Federation and Acclaim. I mean I had no say in whether or not I was going to be in the game. I guess it was just a selection process and I hit the lottery. I won out and I was in the game.



PSEx: What do you think of the sudden surge of popularity among the WWF and wrestling in general? It seems as if in the last year and a half wrestling has gone from a cable sport to something that is now shown in prime time and become mainstream. Did that surprise you?

D'Lo: The company realized this was going to get big, I just don't think they realized how big it was actually going to get. With the advent of our video games and our program not only going, like you said on a cable basis, but in the mainstream media — myself and Steve Austin doing a national commercial on TV for example — it is just really impressive to see how large we've become. My only question is how much larger can we get? We're nowhere near the peak of this. We're shooting straight for the moon. It's going be enjoyable to sit back and watch this sport grow, watch this form of entertainment grow. It's going to get larger and larger.

PSEx: You mentioned earlier that you thought the early version of Attitude you played was already better than Warzone. What did you see in the new game that really made it stand out? Why is Attitude already so much better?

D'Lo: Well, first of all, the faces. Last year's Warzone kind of looked like a square head and they just put a face on it. Remember that? It didn't quite match up to the head. This year, it looks more realistic. The create-a-wrestler feature; before you had five or six generic eyes and five or six generic noses. Now, you have hundreds and hundreds of possibilities. You can create anyone in wrestling. I mean that's just an impressive thing. You can create anyone if you sit there long enough. Stuff like the create your own pay-per-view feature where you can name your own pay-per-view and defend whatever title you want. Even down to creating your own ring entrance lights. Basically, create your own virtual World Wrestling Federation — to me that is impressive. Like I said, that was an early model so the game play was only 30 percent complete — you could barely lock up with the other guy and maybe you could hip toss the guy. But, just the way it looked and all the added features, it wasn't even complete and it blew Warzone away. That took a lot because everyone thought Warzone was the greatest thing since sliced bread. Wait till they get a load of Attitude.

PSEx: Are the wrestling games popular among wrestlers? Do you guys play these with each other before matches?

D'Lo: Most of the time, we spend so much time in hotel rooms and on the highway, right now in my bag I carry my PlayStation with me all the time. My big game right now is Metal Gear Solid, 'till Attitude comes out. But yeah, there's a lot of gamers here. People you wouldn't think of as gamers are gamers: like Hunter, Triple-H, China, Kane, The Rock, Brian Christopher, Mark Henry. Guys you wouldn't think are gamers every night are sitting there playing PlayStation or N64 in their hotel rooms. You have so much time on your hands other than go out and get in trouble, which you know you don't want that, you just sit in your hotel room and grab a couple diet Cokes and go on and play Metal Gear Solid for awhile. Next thing you know, it's 12 o'clock, ready to go to bed.

PSEx: You mentioned that you were playing Metal Gear Solid. Been keeping any other PlayStation games in your bag recently?

D'Lo: All the sports games. Quite honestly, I still keep a copy of Warzone there. I just got that new baseball game — Sammy Sosa endorsed it. I can't remember the name of it. I haven't even played it yet. And football, I'm big on football: Madden '99, college football and NCAA basketball. Stuff like that. I'm more into the sports games. Besides, those are games you can play with more than one person. Like, on Metal Gear Solid, I play by myself, but not many people want to sit around for four hours watching you play. So, you usually get a lot of games where two or three or four people can play at one time. Sports games are a lot more conducive to that.

PSEx: Earlier you told us about a commercial you were in with Steve Austin. For our readers who aren't familiar with the commercial, can you tell us a bit about it?

D'Lo: It's the commercial for 1-800-COLLECT. Steve Austin and I are in the ring wrestling and I'm the guy he's basically beating the hell out of. *laughing* We have a nice little dialogue there and it's just two guys in the ring wrestling around. If you know Steve Austin, you'll know I'm the other guy. It was a very fun commercial and we get rave reviews about it every time anyone sees it. Hopefully, there'll be a part 2 to that commercial — I don't know how much I can come back from getting a butt whipping like that. It's a great commercial and always use 1-800-COLLECT, by the way. *laughing* Gotta get the plug in there.

PSEx: Any closing thoughts for our readers?

D'Lo: Attitude is coming out, make sure to reserve a copy now. I know that game's gonna be a hot seller. Just make sure you get it and remember the World Wrestling Federation is the best in sports entertainment — often imitated, never duplicated.

A star is born...

LARA CROFT

Although Adrian Smith's "official" title is Operations Director at Core Design, he is more commonly known as the "father" of Lara Croft. As someone who's been around since the conception of the character, Adrian probably knows more about Lara than anyone else. So, when the rumors surfaced about a fourth Tomb Raider, we went right to the source. While he couldn't tell us too much about the new game, Adrian was kind enough to share a few juicy tidbits. He also went into detail about the origins and history of Lara, and the worldwide phenomenon she has become. Anyway, enough talk. It's time for a candid conversation with Adrian Smith.

PSEx: So, how did Lara Croft come about?

Adrian: I had a big part in it. It's strange when people ask this question because really what came about was a game called Tomb Raider. It just so happened that it featured a female character in it who was originally called Laura as opposed to Lara. Laura Cruz we called her. And what actually happened was that, when we were designing the game of Tomb Raider, we put down a load of different sets of attributes, different things that we wanted of the main character, and all these things really turned into Lara over a period of time.

PSEx: Why a female character instead of a male?

Adrian: A number of reasons. We literally wrote down a big list of things that we wanted the character to do - we wanted to be coy, we wanted to be agile. When we wrote this long list down it didn't really point towards a male character and that was a really strange thing because here we were, what six and a half, seven years ago now I guess, and it was very stereo-male, no female lead characters at all in that time. All the attributes we put down pointed us towards a female character. We didn't want to end up with an Arnold Schwarzenegger type. As soon as we gave her guns, that's ultimately what we thought we'd end up with.

PSEx: What about the marketing Lara phenomenon? We've seen her on tour with U2, there's the announced movie. At past E3's, we've seen multiple Lara's in various states of undress.

Adrian: It's always the same, hopefully. I've always missed her getting undressed. *laughing* It's massive. None of us ever predicted it. We never thought a game called Tomb Raider would have a female character in it and now the two go hand in hand. Lara is now moving into her own realms, as such and we'll be looking at using Lara in various different things. The character has changed fairly significantly, I think. You know, we use the real life Laras here for stages and public appearances but to us she still exists on the screen as a computer-generated character. I mean, that's where our heart is because that's how we originally drew her and that's how she stands today.

PSEx: What kind of impact do you think Lara has had on the sales of the games? Do the games sell to guys simply because Lara is sexy? Has she opened up the genre to girl gamers or do you think Lara is a turn-off for female players?

Adrian: I don't think she's a turn-off, but I'm male. You know, certainly what we tried to create was to be unsexist – we wanted it to be strong willed, we wanted it to be a woman of the 20th century that knew her own mind that knew what she wanted to do. She was independent. I mean we gave her a lot of attributes that maybe are stereotypical male that we thought would be key to creating a female character. Whether or not it worked, I don't know, I'm not one really to comment on that, but I mean we certainly, in the UK, seized on the spy skills and all that rises sort of to power in women and all that sort of stuff – which really is what we tried to define Lara's character around when we originally were designing and thinking about her. So, I don't think she's a turn-off. For me to play a female character in a video game is great because I play it very much like I'm protecting her on her quest throughout the adventure.

PSEx: Despite the fact that she is a strong character and she knows what she wants, what do you think of some of the criticism the character has received specifically because of the way she's rendered?

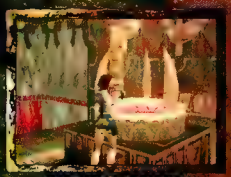
Adrian: She is, first and foremost, a Jessica Rabbit. She is a cartoon character. We drew her just like you would a cartoon character. Unfortunately our reasons for, proportionally, how she's drawn, was because, if she isn't like that on-screen, she actually becomes very hard to distinguish. I mean, this sounds really silly but, you know, attention has been pointed and focused on that and I think it's just because she's the first female sort of major league icon in a game. We could have very easily done sort of a cop-out move and said, "Well, look, there's a female or a male character as well," but we didn't. We stuck by our guns very much and made her exactly as she is. I don't think we've picked up any bad press from it. I think she's made a fairly strict statement, I guess.

PSEx: Do you think the critics focusing on her looks are missing their time?

Adrian: I personally do, yeah. Because you know, as I said, she's a cartoon character. I can't quite myself get to gripe with it.

PSEx: What do you think of all the teenage kids searching for the "nude raider" code on the internet? What about the hackers that actually patched the PC version to make Lara naked?

Adrian: Our stance is fairly clear. We've taken some publicity over it and we're dead against it. I mean, to us, there are a number of key issues. We have to protect our property exactly the same as Walt Disney protects Mickey Mouse. You know, Lara is the same to us as Mickey Mouse is to Disney. So, we have to protect our property specifically with things like the movie coming out because we can't do anything to affect the property. Ultimately we haven't created a sexist game, we haven't created an over violent game, we've created a game, which is based around skill and your control of the



TOMB RAIDER I

TOMB RAIDER 2

TOMB RAIDER 3

character. I've gotten letters from very young children. You know, "my children play Tomb Raider," and I've gotten letters from 60, 70, or 80 year old women as well. It really appeals to a broad range, so it's key to try and keep it focused away from the nude raider stuff. Unfortunately, she is an easy target for these people because there's a lot of pictures about her, there's a lot of publicity about her — she's an easily recognizable character. We do what we can to stop it. We will continue to protect her property and do whatever is necessary. If that means, unfortunately, closing down some web sites, specifically the nude raider one that was really using Lara's name and image to actually point to pornographic web pages (which was our objection to it), we will do what we can legally do to shut them down.

PSEx: Is it true that you have an employee at Core whose sole job is to create pictures of Lara for publicity purposes?

Adrian: It is! Yeah, poor bloke — he's had years of Lara. He's going blind, I think. Marketing is massive. More and more people want to see her, so we have to make more and more images of her and that is just a logistic nightmare. There's a couple of them now, and they're just churning out specific images of Lara.

PSEx: Besides the games, what are some high-profile places that Lara has shown up at? For example, you licensed her out to U2. What else would people have seen her in?

Adrian: There's a lot of stuff that is local to different areas, some of it might not be applicable to Americans. Certainly in France, she's been advertising Siet cars, which is a particular brand of car in France. They chose her as an adventuresome sort of person to promote the whole range of cars, from the four-wheel drive down to a little sports two-seater number. We signed a deal very recently, which was predominately in Australia but now into York, with LucasAid, which is a sort of an energy dealing drink. Lara is the sort of person that if you were backpacking with you'd have an energy dealing drink, so LucasAid is a great one for us and that is a massive, massive campaign in the UK on television. Then, we go into diverse things like the Lara C-clothes range, which is a high quality clothes range that we produce at the moment. And then into the appearances with U2, where she was asked to appear with Bono and the guys from the U2 tour, it was just a fantastic opportunity. And, obviously, the big one will be the movie... I'm sure we'll do a lot of that for the movie.

PSEx: When did you, and Core, realize that you had an icon on your hands, instead of just a basic game character? What was the reaction in the office?

Adrian: We were all ready to go and leave... I think it was so scary. I think it was driven quite a bit by the press that saw Tomb Raider before we released it. They said, "you've got something very special," but then it was special based around the game. I think the real groundswell towards Tomb Raider came when the game actually shipped and the members of the public got their hands on Tomb Raider and actually saw Lara in there. That's when we realized suddenly, "We made this thing." We have to go back and give Lara history, we have to create a bio for her. We have to say where she was educated, how old she was, what music she liked. This was driven by demand, the public wanted to know.

PSEx: What would you say to the criticism that Core has just turned out a new "level-pack" of Tomb Raider levels with a tweaked engine instead of creating an entirely new game? Why not completely revamp it and put out something using new technology?

Adrian: Well, it's market driven. That's the easiest thing to say. We've produced a different game every year now for the last three years, based around the Tomb Raider system. Yes, the core technology has been modified from year to year. No, the core technology has not been changed but, quite honestly, if we were to go away and develop a new game now, it wouldn't be Tomb Raider, or it would be Tomb Raider and people wouldn't notice any difference. Moving forward into later this year and into the next generation, who knows what will happen with Tomb Raider? People want more of Tomb Raider. They like the essence of the game, they like the adventure style, they like the action style that the game is and we do one every year. You're quite happy to go and see a film every month. You know James Bond keeps making movies, still massive blockbuster hits. Star Wars is back and I'm sure it'll be the biggest ever. I think Tomb Raider is the same. The games get better and better. It sells more and more each time. The time that we will stop will be when we feel that we actually can't push or put some new elements in there and we've always put enough new things in, I think, to have a new game in the Tomb Raider series.

PSEx: Has the popularity of the character ever made you consider doing a different style of game starring Lara?

Adrian: I think, again, it goes back to the property and it goes back to what Lara's good at. Lara is a female version of Indiana Jones and Indiana Jones, at the end of the day, is an adventurer, just like Lara. So, simply putting Lara in a racing car, for instance, for us, just doesn't work. It's just totally out of character. It's something she wouldn't do. It would actually be very easy for us and I think that would be when, probably rightly so, we would deserve to get criticism. If we were to milk the property of Lara and produce Lara Chess and Lara Ice Hockey and Lara Football, I think then we'd deserve it, but we've always chosen to stick to our guns and stick to really what Lara's all about.

PSEx: Would you say to people who accuse Lara of not being a good role model and perpetuating a super-model image? Is it just a game?

Adrian: It is just a game, you're absolutely right. To us, it's just a game featuring a female character. It's an adventure game and we built a strong character based around an adventure game, whether or not she's male or female. Would you be asking me the same question had it been a male character? Probably not. The game would have been the same, except it would have been a male character. We tried to have a good role model in Lara when we were thinking about her. I think today that we probably have. I certainly wouldn't change elements of her at the moment. She's not a super-model, she's probably of super-model status, but, we don't portray that in the game. You don't see her doing her hair or putting her lipstick on, you know, she's a girl that lives by her wits.

PSEx: Do you think it is unusual to see strong female characters in the gaming industry?

Adrian: Oh, God, yes. Still, very unusual, probably because we all know that 90 percent of the gaming public are male. It is still very strange. In the past, when we've had female characters, it's been a token offering. It's the "I could be a male or I could be a female," choice, but I don't think that works because that changes the whole essence of the game. You know, the game is Tomb Raider, it's Lara and we designed the puzzles and we designed the game based around that type, so it wouldn't have worked with a male character.

PSEx: What do you think of the general tendency in the gaming industry to have a game with a male character who is buff, and fully clothed, and a female character who is wearing nothing more than a bathing suit? Why not show a female character fully armored up in a game?

Adrian: I think it's not realistic for both the male and female character, if I'm honest about it. I think certainly there is still a stereotype female character that people are putting into video games and I think that is probably changing now. I think that's just because there haven't been female characters, so they've been put in there and they have been put in almost, in some instances, as an afterthought and just to appeal to a mass audience, never been thought about. I think it will change. I think the role of a female character can be as strong as a role of a male character and play a very different part in the game and have different attributes and add a whole different gaming element to the game. I think we'll see a lot more female characters going forward, and I think we'll see stronger characters and the characters will be used better in the context of the game as well.

PSEx: If Lara were a real person, what would she think of all the hype surrounding her?

Adrian: She wouldn't be bothered because she'd probably be halfway up Mount Everest on her next challenge. I think she's the sort of person that would just laugh it off and live with it and get on with her life.

PSEx: What kind of game is Tomb Raider 4? Can we expect more urban and industrial areas like TR3, or does the game harken back to the archeological sites found in the first game?

Adrian: The game is called Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation and this adventure takes place throughout locations in Egypt. We've gone with one main location to tie in the storyline much better than the last game. We are really going back to the roots of what made the original game so addicting. Strong storyline, awe-inspiring locations, and interesting puzzles.

PSEx: Will the game use a new engine or is this new Tomb Raider going to be using an updated version of the Tomb Raider 3 engine?

Adrian: TLR utilizes an entirely new inventory and puzzle system which makes the gameplay experience much different. Graphically, it is leaps and bounds above TR3.

PSEx: We understand that the new Tomb Raider will be in a continuous world without loading between levels. How hard was this to accomplish?

Adrian: Not hard at all, technically. We want to keep the gamer involved in the story and the experience.

PSEx: Is the game a follow-up to events in a previous game, or is it a standalone adventure?

Adrian: You'll see... We plan to touch base on how Lara got started tomb raiding.

PSEx: Where does it occur in the Lara Croft timeline? Is it after Tomb Raider 3, or is this a prequel of sorts?

Adrian: It's a new adventure, but it ties in her past.

PSEx: Can you explain anything about the environments seen in the screen shots?

Adrian: These are just a few of the shots within an Egyptian tomb. In some, you can really see the depth of the environment and the amount of detail that's put into the texture maps, making it, by far, the best looking adventure yet.

TOMB RAIDER 4

SOME RE-ASSEM

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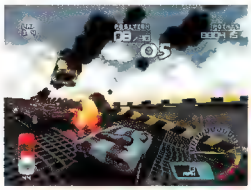

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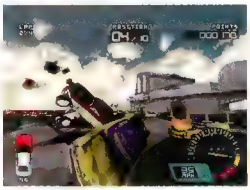

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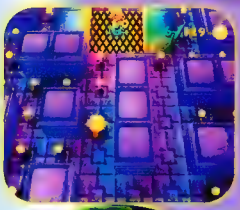
PSM EDITOR'S CHOICE

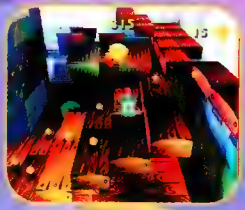
98%

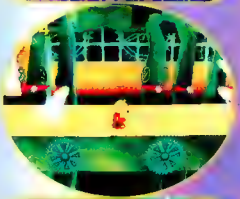
20th ANNIVERSARY

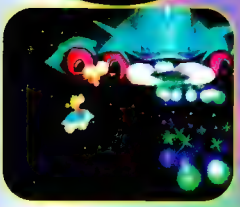
PAC-MAN WORLD

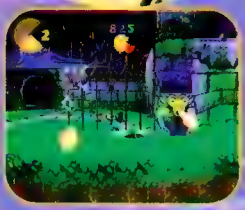
This year marks the 20th anniversary of the game and character that really brought video gaming into the home, Pac-Man. To celebrate our favorite yellow sphere's 'birthday', Namco is releasing a new Pac-Man adventure that looks to put him before a new generation, with new technology and gameplay that takes the original arcade game and super-charges it, without losing what made the original concept special. To honor video gaming's first media darling and the star of this exceptional new game, Pac-Man World, we thought it would be fun to take a look at where the retro gaming movement is headed as we move into the 1999 holiday shopping season. In addition to this cover story, make sure to read Mark Androvich's feature on the following pages on a number of other classic games that will soon be a part of gaming's new post-modern movement. Fun never gets old!











I can't even begin to tell you how surprised I was by Pac-Man World when I played the three level demo for the first time at E3 back in May. It is fair to say that "Pac-Man 3D" (as those of us in the video game magazine business had been calling it for the past three years) had fallen into what is commonly referred to as "Development Hell" and most of us were convinced that, if it was ever released, it wasn't going anywhere... how wrong we have been!

The more time I spend in this line of work, the more I come to the realization that there are a few developers/publishers that you should always give the benefit of the doubt to. While most games that languish in development for as long as Pac-Man World has end up being less than worthy, Namco has once again shown that they are among the PlayStation elite by taking advantage of the time afforded to produce a 3D Pac-Man game that is worthy of its namesake and one of the most exceptional titles of 1999.

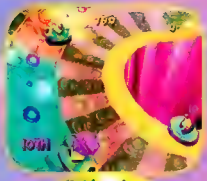
Pac-Man World, through a controlled camera in 3D space (think Crash Bandicoot or Klonoa), manages to seamlessly blend the simple, addictive, static screen, pellet-gobbling gameplay of the original arcade game with a large and varied 3D adventure game that re-invents Pac-Man for the new millennium. The game consists of three different parts: the original arcade game (Classic), a series of new mazes (Mazes) and the

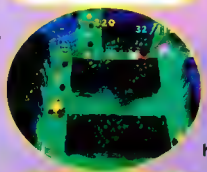
heart and soul of the new game, its adventure mode (Quest). The Quest mode consists of 23 levels of action. In this mode, Pac-Man comes to life as a three-dimensional character with some new (and some old) abilities. In addition to pellet-munching and ghost chasing, Pac-Man can now butt-bounce, spin-dash, fire pellets at enemies, swim, become solid steel Pac-Man, jump and climb, drive bumper cars, spin on hover platforms and deal with more environmental obstacles than any one yellow sphere with legs could rightfully be expected to.

The story behind the Quest mode involves an evil arch-nemesis, Toc-Man, that is jealous of Pac-Man's style and popularity. Toc-Man sends out Blinky and the boys to round up six of Pac-Man's closest friends, including Ms. Pac Man, Professor Pac-Man, etc., to use them as bait to lure Pac-Man to Ghost Island, where all the fun will begin. Pac-Man must locate six keys, some easy to find and some well-hidden, to release his six friends. Only by doing so can Pac-Man face Toc-Man in the final confrontation. Along the way, Pac-Man will need to find the P-A-C-M-A-N letters that hide behind doors and in out of the way places in each and every level (finding all of them will open up a bonus round at the completion of the level). In addition, there are Galaxian ship icons (one in each level) that, when found, open up doors that lead to 3D mazes. By opening these mazes in Quest Mode, they become available in the game's Mazes mode. You can not complete 100% of the game until you have found all of the Galaxian keys and opened up and completed all of the mazes in Quest mode, then completed them all again in a maze marathon in Mazes mode.

What makes the Quest mode work is the fact that, no matter how big a particular level is or how many new features are brought into the experience, you are never too far away from a quick ghost chase and some pellet munching. And, because of the controlled camera, you rarely are put in a situation where it is not obvious that gameplay comes first. For all of the new-found complexity of the Quest mode, the gameplay is every bit as easy to get into and, in my opinion, even more addicting than the original game. And, it features some of the most inventive bosses you're likely to come across in the world of action/platform gaming — most of which involve two distinct phases; an escape (or dash) phase where you must run like a mad (Pac) man, and a classic attack and avoid phase. In addition, the new 3D mazes to be found in the Mazes mode (and within Quest mode) are creatively designed, with a number of new environmental obstacles and attacks to keep things interesting.

All of this attention to updating classic gameplay doesn't mean that the good folks at Namco have left the game's graphic technology as an afterthought to maintaining the sprit and integrity of the Pac-Man experience... quite the contrary. The 3D engine (which I have a sneaking suspicion was born out of the company's work on Klonoa) is colorful, very detailed, fast and solid. It is every bit as attractive as the best AP games on the platform (Crash, GEX, Medievil, Spyro) and, while it doesn't offer the "go-anywhere" environments that those of us in the media always seem to be pining for, it shouldn't have them anyway. The controlled 3D is exactly what Pac-Man needs to succeed. There are more special effects, great lighting and tricks like environmental mapping (changing into steel Pac-Man to sink to the floor of a body of water is a great example of this technology) that help to keep you involved in Pac-Man's new world.





Then, there is the music. Every themed area in Quest mode has a corresponding soundtrack and, without exception, all of the musical numbers are exceptional. Each of the game's themed areas (pirate, circus, space, Egyptian, high-tech and haunted) features atmospheric music that is perfectly suited for the graphic environment for which it has been written. The best compliment I can give it is to use an example from the haunted levels. The music is reminiscent of a couple of old 3DO games from EA and 3DO, Monster Manor and Killing Time — two of my all-time favorites, soundtrack-wise. Of course, in Pac-Man World, this represents 1/6th of the graphic/musical theme, not the entire game.

Rounding out the package is the inclusion of an emulated version of the original arcade game and control that is spot-on. The play control is so tight that I play the game in analog mode, even though this type of game engine is usually better-suited to digital control. Like the best games; Crash, Ape Escape, Medievil, Syphon Filter, etc., you know when you've got something in your hands that simply works — Pac-man World falls in this elite company.

Rarely does a game offer as much quality, depth, variety and addictive, long-term play value as is to be found in Pac-Man World. Add to all of this the overall visual and aural quality of the package and you have what I believe will be a major hit this holiday season. I have to admit, I didn't think it was going to happen and am happy to eat my words; Namco's San Jose, California based development team has outdone themselves with an outstanding effort that will compete for Game of the Year honors in 1999. Happy 20th Pac-Dude!

DAVE

WELCOME TO THE RETRO REVOLUTION

With Pac-Man leading the way, 1999 promises to be a big year for fans of retrogaming. But when did the resurgence of interest in classic videogames begin?

In one sense, retrogaming has been with us all along. Interest in a handful of videogame properties, most notably Pac-Man and Space Invaders, has never waned. These games have continued to appear on at least one system in every successive hardware generation. Most coin-op classics are not as long-lived, however. The vast majority appeared on the home consoles of the day and then disappeared with the next batch of systems and newer arcade games.

In 1982, when the Atari 5200 became the very first follow-up system, most of the games released for it were translations of arcade games which had already appeared on its predecessor, the Atari 2600. However, most of these coin-op games were still popular in the arcades at the time, so I consider these games to be contemporaneous with their arcade counterparts. Retrogaming had not yet been born.

When the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) and the Atari 7800 appeared after the market crash of the early 1980's, several classic arcade games such as Joust, Ms. Pac-Man, Donkey Kong, and Galaga were released for these systems. Should these be considered the first retrogames since they had already appeared on two prior generations of hardware? I don't think so. The coin-op games were still just 3-4 years old at the time, and the games weren't being marketed as "classics" yet.

The 16-bit generation of consoles, which included the Genesis and the SNES, was nearly ten years removed from the arcade games of the early 80's. There was a better consensus as to which games could now be considered classics. However, many of the 16-bit games which took their names from earlier titles looked and played nothing like the originals. Donkey Kong Country, for example, wouldn't have been mistaken for the arcade Donkey Kong. On the other hand, a game such as Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure contained many elements which were similar to the original Pitfall! (not to mention a hidden version of the original 2600 game). Was this the first sign of an interest in retrogaming?

The Atari Jaguar also deserves a mention, if only for one title — Tempest 2000 (1994). The game included a reasonable facsimile of the classic coin-op while at the same time providing a new version with enhanced graphics and sound and improved gameplay. Just a year earlier Nintendo released Super Mario All-Stars for the SNES — a compilation which included graphically-enhanced versions of the three Super Mario Brothers games originally only available on the NES. Although the game looked and sounded better, thanks to the power of the SNES, the gameplay remained identical. It is clear that these games were trying to capitalize on feelings of nostalgia.

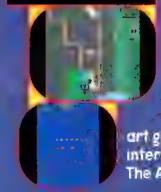
Let's not forget the computer scene either. In 1991, Activision released two "Lost Treasures of Infocom" collections which brought the classic text-adventure games to modern PC's. Digital Eclipse's Williams Digital Arcade (1994) for the Macintosh preceded the interest in MAME and other emulators. Activision's Atari 2600 Action Packs (1995) made classic home videogames available on computers, while Microsoft's Arcade brought several coin-op classics back to life on the PC. All of these titles contributed to the growing interest in old videogames.

Ultimately, however, retrogaming didn't become a phenomenon until companies realized how much money could be made. The huge success of Hasbro's Frogger (1997), despite critical reviews, proved that there was still profit to be had from some of those "golden oldies." It was only after Frogger that companies such as Activision decided to remake their classic for the 1990's and that Hasbro itself decided to buy the remnants of Atari and several properties from Namco.

The challenge facing retrogaming developers is how to make a classic game feel brand new while keeping whatever it was that made the game a hit in the first place. So far, it seems that there are three paths they can take. The first route is to keep the game exactly as it was — releasing it in an emulated form. The second technique is to improve the graphics and sound, but to keep the gameplay virtually identical. The final formula is to create an entirely new game featuring concepts and characters taken from the original title. This year, it looks like we will be seeing games which are representative of each method.

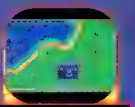
MIDWAY'S

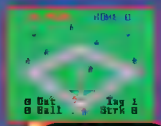
ARCADE PARTY PACK



Namco and Midway have already released several collections of classic arcade games in their original form, and Konami will soon join them with their own compilation of 1980's coin-ops (see review this issue). Not to be outdone, Midway is releasing at least one more collection – tentatively titled "Arcade Party Pak." While the line-up of games has yet to be finalized, the following will definitely be included: Smash TV, Rampage, Gauntlet II, Super Sprint, Toobin', and Klax. Other contenders to top the collection off at an even dozen include Wizard of War, Gorf, Satan's Hollow, 720, APB, and Omega Race.

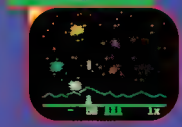
As with Midway's earlier Arcade's Greatest Hits collections, which featured art galleries, interviews, and trivia challengers, the developers plan to include interviews with the programmers and creators of the original arcade games. The Arcade Party Pak looks to be one of the best collections yet.



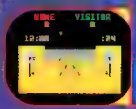


ACTIVISION'S

Intellivision Lives!

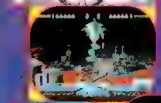


Lest you think that classic collections are limited to arcade games, Activision is planning to produce a PlayStation version of "Intellivision Lives!" a PC title which featured 50 emulated games that originally appeared on Mattel's Intellivision home system in the early 1980's. The computer version contained screen shots, package artwork, programmer biographies, and video clips (such as those George Plympton television commercials). While the PlayStation version will feature only 30 games, it will also contain a special "video history" section with interviews of some of the original programmers and designers – material which was lacking in Activision's collection of Atari 2600 games.

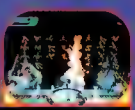


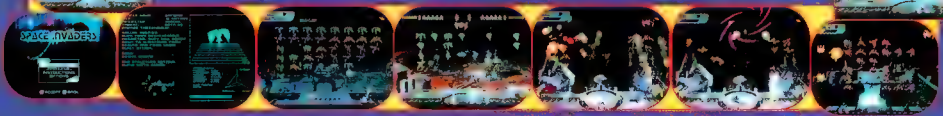
ACTIVISION'S

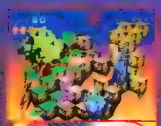
Space Invaders



Last year, Activision improved the graphics and sound of the classic coin-op Asteroids, added power-ups, but kept the original gameplay-requiring players to blast oncoming objects as they rotate in space. This year, Activision plans to do a similar update with Space Invaders. The basic gameplay – moving a cannon left and right to destroy advancing aliens before they reach ground zero – will remain the same. However, along with redesigned graphics and better audio-visual effects, the designers will give players different weapons, power-ups and bonus stages.





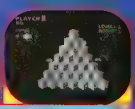


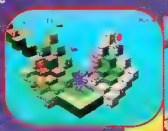
HASBRO'S

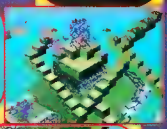
Q*bert

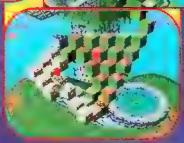
The original Q*Bert required players to maneuver a little orange creature on a pyramid of blocks, changing the colors of the blocks by jumping on them while avoiding enemies. The game was unique in that there were no fire buttons at all – just a diagonally-oriented joystick. As the game progressed, players were required to change the block colors more than once, new types of enemies appeared, and the overall pace quickened. Q*bert spawned a little-seen coin-op sequel called Q*Bert's Qubes, as well as a Saturday-morning cartoon series, but then went into retirement.

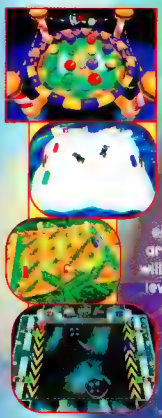
Hasbro's Q*Bert remake for the PlayStation keeps the same gameplay – players still hop diagonally on cubes. However, the producers have added power-ups, new types of blocks, a 2-player simultaneous mode, some new characters, and mini-games and puzzles. In addition, the grouping of blocks is now configured differently instead of remaining pyramid-shaped. While the game is still a work-in-progress, the designers are trying hard to make the new additions remain faithful to the original concept.





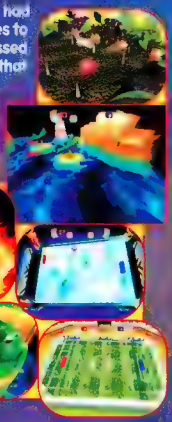






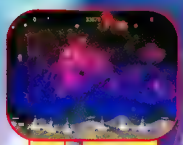
HASBRO'S

pong



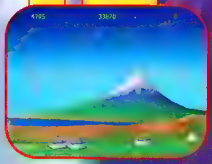
Atari's Pong, the first commercially successful videogame, had the most basic gameplay imaginable. Two players used paddles to hit a ball back and forth across the screen. If one of them missed the ball, the other received a point. Depending upon the angle that the ball struck the paddle or the walls at the top and bottom of the screen, its trajectory could be altered. The ball also sped up as the game progressed. Pong fathered a host of knock-offs, as well as bona fide sequels such as Quadrapong and Super Pong, but was quickly left behind as players demanded new and better gameplay.

Hasbro's Pong does an amazing job of updating the game for the 90's. For starters, instead of white paddles on a solid black background, the game is played in colorful 3D levels. The new playfields aren't just for show either—they contain elements which affect the gameplay. For instance, there are penguins wandering around the ice level. If you hit them with the ball, they will lay an "egg" which becomes an additional ball put into play. In the jungle level, there are wooden log "rollers" in the center of the screen which can be activated. The ball changes trajectory and speed based upon the direction that the rollers are spinning. Next, the designers added power-ups which give players an added advantage during the game. There are multi-player contests which allow players to team up against each other, and there is even a new circular playing field where the object is to pop balloons in the center while moving your paddle 360 degrees. Finally, the paddles themselves have been animated to add "character" where none existed.



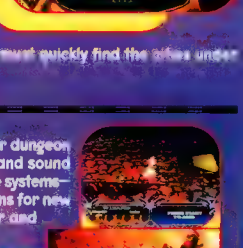
HASBRO'S

MISSILE COMMAND



Originally titled Armageddon, Atari's Missile Command required players to defend six cities from a nuclear attack. You had to use a trackball to place a cursor in the path of the warheads and then choose one of three bases from which to fire a missile. The time it took your missile to reach the incoming missiles varied depending upon which base you launched it from. If any warheads got through, they would vaporize your cities or bases, but you could continue playing so long as a single city survived. As the game progressed, your cities were attacked by smart bombs which dodged missile fire. Incoming missiles split into multiple bogeys, and you had to conserve your defensive missiles if you had any hope of survival.

Hasbro's Missile Command update keeps these elements, but now gives you a much larger area to defend. The screen rotates 360 ° and you are provided with a radar showing the location of all your cities as well as the incoming missiles. The frantic pace of the original is retained as you must quickly find the cities under attack and just as quickly move off to another area.



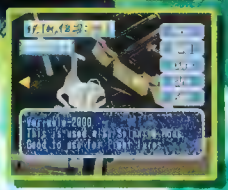
MIDWAY

Gauntlet Legends is a coin-op sequel to the original Atari four-player dungeon exploration game Gauntlet. The concept is the same, but the graphics and sound have been updated. Midway plans to port the arcade game to several home systems—including the PlayStation. Midway has also announced plans for new home versions of the classic arcade games Spy Hunter and Paperboy. At this point, it is uncertain whether or not these games will appear on the PlayStation, although an N64 version of Paperboy was shown at E3.

GAME OVER?

Not every dead coin-op game deserves to be revived, of course, and not every effort at bringing an oldie back will be successful. However, it is encouraging to know that an effort is being made to keep the classics alive. Retrogames have become a breath of fresh air to a new generation of players, and a welcome trip down memory lane for those of us old enough to feel nostalgic for the originals.

How Does Your Rod Measure Up?



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- Game is bundled with custom designed fishing rod/reel controller
- Solo or tournament modes
- 5 challenging lakes, 14 species of fish
- Cast side arm, overhead, or skip
- Tutorial mode tells how the pros hook the big ones
- Dual shock compatible
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PlayStation

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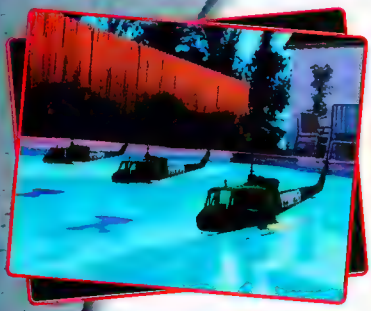
3do

ARMY MEN AIR ATTACK

october

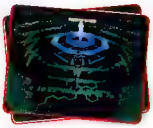


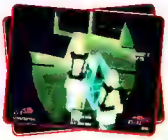
Army Men 3D was one of the more pleasant surprises this spring. The game was packed with everything a gamer could want: plenty of action, a cool retro concept, a great license and tons of replay. The only thing left on our wish list was an improved graphics package. Continuing this trend is one of two evolutions of the original, Army Men: Air Attack. As the name would suggest, this title continues the plastic Army Men theme and puts them in the air for some high-intensity air combat (no pun intended). In Air Attack, we're introduced to an all new hero, no not G.W. Bush, but the "Captain" himself. Captain leads the air cav in a new series of campaigns where they join up with the hero from the original, Sarge. Together, the Captain and Sarge fight to rescue POW's, extract wounded allies, sabotage enemy plans and, of course, fight the evil horde known as the Tan Nemesis. You'll have access to four different helicopters, ground troops, armored Jeeps and a whole host of other interesting battlefield "toys".

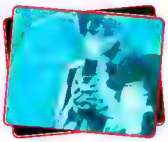
konami

METAL GEAR VR: MISSIONS

october







In an attempt to capitalize on the success of Metal Gear Solid, Konami is releasing a stand-alone expansion pack of sorts, titled Metal Gear Solid: VR Missions. While not exactly a new Solid Snake adventure, VR Missions expands on the cool, Tron-like training simulation mode from the first game, with over 300 new VR-style missions to accomplish. As former Foxhound Special Forces operative Solid Snake, it will be up to you to complete a barrage of back-breaking training exercises designed to make you "all that you can be". This new set of missions takes Snake through all of his paces, and will require you to not only expertly make use of the entire arsenal of weaponry from the original game, but will most expertly strain your brain with an array of bafflingly clever puzzle solving missions. While we haven't quite made our way through all of the 300 missions as of yet, from the game's rolling attract mode, it looks like there are some very cool goodies tucked away in the game, including a level where you battle a huge, giant-sized guard and some missions where you take on the persona of Ninja. Currently on-schedule for release this October, we will have the review in next month's issue.

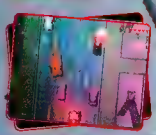
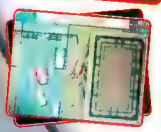
rockstar

GRAND THEFT AUTO 2

october

Due to its edgy content, fun gameplay and controversy surrounding the level of depicted violence, the original Grand Theft Auto (GTA) was a surprise hit and Rockstar Games has already capitalized on its success once by releasing an add-on disk (a first for a PSX game). Without missing a beat, the sequel has been announced, cleverly titled GTA2. You are Claude Speed, once again responsible for the destruction and chaos of the big city. This time around, however, there are SIX gangs to keep at arms-length, all the while trying to maintain your rank amongst the other hoodlums. You'll gain influence, respect, and points by playing gangs against each other, but you'll have to always be on the move, otherwise you'll be the one going down!

Some of the new features include a smarter gang system (better tuned AI) and a completely new game engine that provides a faster frame rate, even though more objects will be on-screen at the same time. Also, even though the game engine is all-new, it will keep the same overhead perspective as the original GTA. There will be more than thirty (30) new vehicles to jack and drive, and the go-anywhere metropolis will be even larger than before!

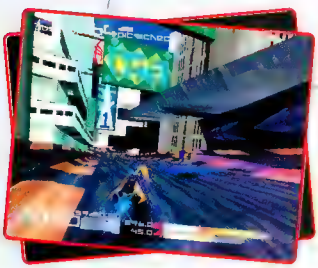



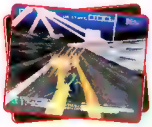
psygnosis

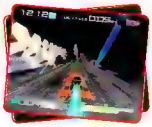
WIPEOUT 3

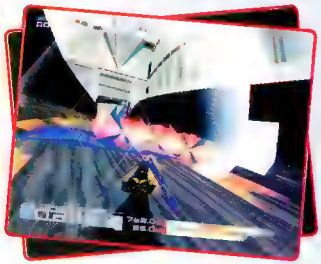
october

Design work for Wipeout 3 has, once again, fallen to the mighty Designer's Republic — and they haven't disappointed. The environments, the vehicles, even the user interface, have a completely new look. Wipeout 3 is a total evolution from Wipeout XL — it isn't a simple retread. The first thing you notice when playing Wipeout 3 is the Dual Shock support. Playing the game with the analog stick gives you so much more control. Combining the analog steering with proper use of the airbrakes allows the execution of some fairly disorienting turns. Some of the nifter weapons include a force wall, which stops your opponent cold, and an energy drain that steals shield energy from one of your competitors. Currently, it is possible to completely drain away an opponents shield energy and eliminate them, but this may change for the final release. Also in the "ultra cool" department is the new sound effect for the quake weapon. Wipeout 3 keeps the progression scheme found in the earlier games. When you first start the game, only about half of the tracks and cars are available to you. More tracks (and vehicles) can be earned by playing through the various levels of the game. Early tracks are easy enough to master, but some of the later levels are downright nasty. We're convinced the level designers for the game are either a) geniuses or b) high on "alternative medicines". Regardless, Wipeout 3 is sure to challenge even the most hardened Wipeout veterans. Look for a full review in the near future.









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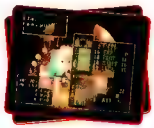
konami

SUIKODEN II

august

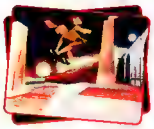
Konami has two very cool role playing sequels coming out this year; Vandal Hearts II and Suikoden II. While Vandal Hearts is still a ways off (it's scheduled for a November release), Suikoden II is right around the corner. Continuing from the first, the storyline revolves around two young soldiers who must face some arduous adventures, as well as difficult, life-altering choices, in order to survive. When a vicious war comes to its bitter end, the two men look forward to going home. But, the night before their return, their platoon is slaughtered in a brutal ambush – arranged by their own commander! Framed for the attack as part of a cover-up, the two are branded as traitors and plunged into yet another war that they cannot both survive. With adult-themes and thought-provoking content, Suikoden II will feature extensive spell and attack animations, huge, tactical battles that involve all of the saga's 108 characters and a special feature that allows you to save and utilize data from the original.

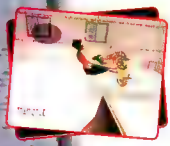


rockstar

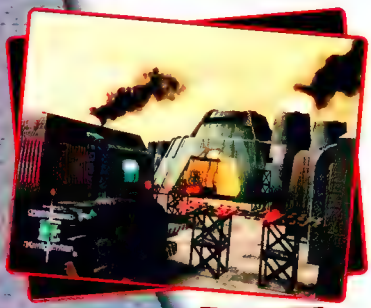
THRASHER

september





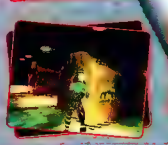
Rockstar/Take 2 continues its march through the video game landscape with the introduction of Thrasher: Skate and Destroy, a street skateboarding game due out this November. Aimed at the "mid-way point" of the PlayStation demographic, Skate and Destroy takes its name from the skateboarding magazine, Thrasher, a magazine even some of the old-timers admit to reading a few times when it was first published and they were in high school. The game is, as you would expect, a skateboarding "sim", and we use the word loosely, that enables the players to compete for sponsorships and Thrasher covers. Of course, all of the "cool" clothes and music that accompanys this sport will also be included, such as Zoo York, Supreme and Rookie, in the clothes department, and Run DMC, Rappers Delight and Trouble Funk on the music side. Expect the title to play a little like a combination of 3Xtreme and Cool Boarders. If they can pull it off, this could be quite cool indeed. There are six different skaters, each with unique characteristics and styles. Of course, it's all about the tricks, so, ultimately it will boil down to your ability to master their unique talents if you are to win that cover. Look for a full review in the coming months as Thrasher goes up against Activision's Tony Hawk. Until then, remember dude, skateboarding is not a crime.



tba

TOO HUMAN

tba



Too Human is the name of a new PlayStation game currently in development by Silicon Knights (the developers of Crystal Dynamic's original Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain). At work on the project since '97, the game is billed as a futuristic, high-tech psychological thriller set in the world of corporate espionage. In the year 2450, players take on the role of John Franks, an undercover police officer who has been assigned to investigate the death of a fellow officer. Of course, under the surface, all is not what it seems to be and Franks becomes more and more exposed to the brutal and seedy side of the high-tech corporate world. Moving away from the two-dimensional, top-down environments of Kain, Silicon Knights has created a completely new, cutting-edge 3D graphic engine running in the PlayStation's high-resolution mode, while holding at a steady 30 frames per second. In addition, the game will continuously stream off the CD, eliminating load times altogether (a technique found in more and more of today's games). While the gameplay has yet to be revealed, it's evident, like Blood Omen, it will be story-driven as much as it is action/adventure. As of press time, no publisher has been announced, and the game is on schedule to be finished in time for a holiday release. We'll definitely have more scoopage on the game as it becomes available.

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Do you have what it takes to shoot and slice your way through 10 action-packed levels and become the "Super Ultra Sexy Hero"? Rising Zan: The Samurai Gunman takes you back to the wild west of 1800's where, armed with only a gun, Katana sword, and some ultra sexy moves, you'll face a town full of the meanest, ugliest and weirdest outlaws you've ever seen.

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PlayStation

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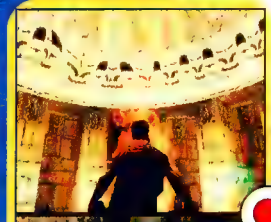
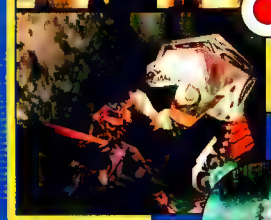
Agetec, Inc. 900 Veterans Blvd. Suite 600 Redwood City, CA 94063

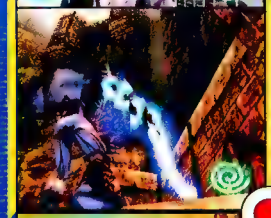
REVIEWED BY: GREG OFF

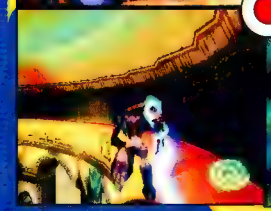
GENRE:	Adventure
PUBLISHED BY:	Eidos
DEVELOPED BY:	Crystal Dynamics
ORIGIN:	U.S.
# OF CD'S:	1
AVAILABLE:	Now

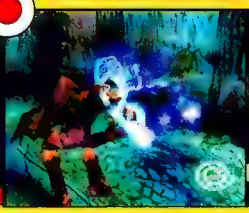
LEGACY OF KAIN SOUL REAVER

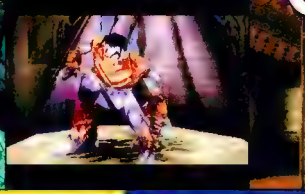


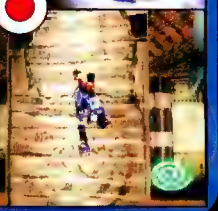


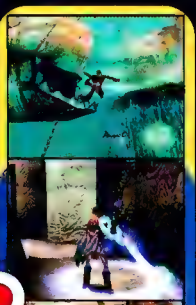








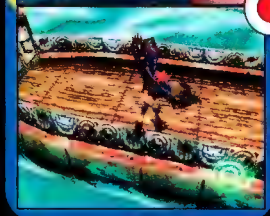


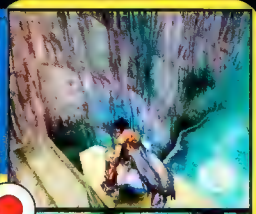


If you're a gamer, you've likely been following the progress of Crystal Dynamics/Eidos' Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver. Yes, it's true, the game has suffered many delays during its lengthy development cycle. Shown way too early, in my opinion (it was first demo'd at E3 two years ago), the game, as it was meant to be, is finally coming to fruition. What really does my heart proud is that both Crystal and Eidos could have caved under the pressure and released Soul Reaver unfinished; maybe cutting a piece out here or eliminating an animation there. Instead, they held their ground — even though most of the gaming press ran all of their covers and coverage as early as the middle of last year (Legacy of Kain, along with Akuji the Heartless, was featured on our cover in February, Vol. 4, Iss. 3) — and saw this masterpiece through to its completion.

Like a few other notable titles coming out this year, Soul Reaver will surely be one of the most talked about and most memorable PlayStation gaming experiences to be had for '99. As a sequel of sorts to the original 2D Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain (developed by Silicon Knights), Soul Reaver takes the dark atmosphere and vampiric storyline from the first and ushers it, quite literally, into new dimensions. Set one hundred years in the future from the original, Soul Reaver assumes that Kain had refused to be sacrificed at the Pillar of Balance (one of two choices in the ending from the first game). In doing so, he became a Dark God and the self-proclaimed ruler of Nosgoth. As the Supreme Ruler, Lord Kain began his conquest of the world. His first act was to recruit an army of dark lords from the underworld. Among his chosen cadre of six was Raziel, a powerful vampire and warrior. As Dark Gods, Kain and his brethren would evolve and transform every decade or so. Always it was Kain who would change first, with one of the others following suit some time later. In a twist of fate that would change things forever, Raziel had the audacity to evolve before his master and grew wings. In an outrage, Kain cast Raziel into the Lake of the Dead, leaving him to burn in the acidic waters for all eternity. If it wasn't for the Elder, Raziel would have been left to die. But this strange and ancient voice somehow thwarted Death and offered Raziel immortality and the chance for revenge in exchange for stopping Kain and his clan. The Elder had relied on the souls of Nosgoth for its sustenance and it seems Kain's vampire dynasty had been depriving the Elder of his lifeblood for centuries. As Raziel, you are now given a second chance to avenge yourself by stalking the Material Plane and slaying your former brethren.

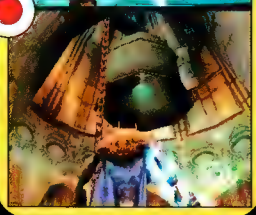
Without a doubt, this game has to be the most technologically advanced game for the 32-bit system so far. There are so many high-quality graphical effects going on that it's hard to believe that this game is on the PlayStation

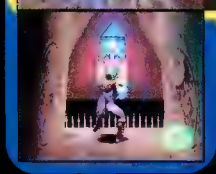




and even harder to believe that the core engine of the game came from the original GEX: Enter the Gecko. While I don't have the official, technical list in front of me, Soul Reaver sports an array amazing graphical features, such as a streaming graphic engine with just about no load times from one area to the next, the ability to morph the environment from the Spectral to the Material Planes in real time (which is, in essence, two different levels in one), a 3D graphic engine that has no peer – eventually, you can glide, climb, swim, look around, manipulate objects and shoot/throw – and some of the best-looking graphics I've ever seen on the PlayStation. In fact, Soul Reaver looks more like some medieval, gothic oil painting come to life than a video game.

As for gameplay, Soul Reaver delivers in spades. Mixing light role playing elements with plenty of exploration, hand-to-hand combat and puzzle solving, Kain just feels epic in nature. The game is completely non-linear, with a huge world to explore and uncover. Although, at the start of the game, Raziel's powers are limited, and only through beating the various bosses (his brothers), will he earn different abilities (such as climbing and swimming), allowing him to explore other areas otherwise inaccessible. In addition, there is the shifting between Spectral and Material Planes, which adds a whole new element to the game. As an immortal, Kain can never die, but he can be sent back to the Spectral Plane if he loses all of his health. In order to stay on the Material Plane (the only one where he can manipulate objects, such as opening doors, picking up weapons and moving blocks), he must constantly feed on souls to keep his hunger satisfied and his health full. As a result, there is a constant need to engage in combat with the enemies. In a gameplay twist, most of the enemies in the game are of vampiric nature and can only be killed by traditional ways – impaling, burning, exposure to sunlight, or thrown into water – making it necessary to always have a weapon on-hand or scout out the area for possible killing methods. As the game progresses, Raziel will earn the Soul Reaver, a lightsaber-like sword that attaches to his arm and comes with the ability to implode enemies and rip the soul from within – very cool. The exploration part of the game seems pretty deep, although I found there is a lot of running around in empty hallways. Since the game's world is so huge, the developers at CD came up with warp gates that allow you to teleport from one area to the next (again with no load time – how do they do that?). The puzzle solving ranges from menial block pushing and switch pulling (a la Tomb Raider) to some inspired bits. I did find myself actually stumped a few times.





Some of the other cool features I should mention (before I run out of space) are great ambient music, haunting sound effects and quality voice acting, spot-on controls (which is amazing considering the amount of things Raziel can do), and unparalleled character animation.

Soul Reaver is such an elegant and excellent game that I only wish it could go on endlessly. In any event, the few weeks you'll spend playing it will be well remembered.

BOTTOM LINE

I have no problem giving Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver the coveted Platinum score of 99%. Is it perfect? No, but it's so damn good. Thankfully, Crystal Dynamics took their time with the game, and it truly shows with the end product. Like some of the PlayStation elite from the past (Metal Gear, Final Fantasy VII, Syphon Filter, Tomb Raider, etc.), Soul Reaver is guaranteed to be a memorable title and one that will take up a huge chunk of your time this summer. Wait no longer, go out and get this game!

SCORE:

98%

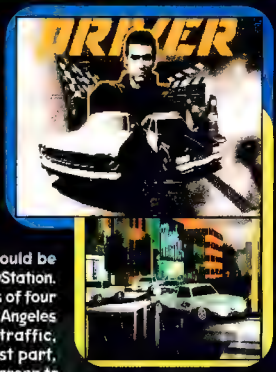
COMPATIBILITY

1 Player | Analog Control Compatible | Vibration Function Compatible

REVIEWED BY: GREG OFF

GENRE: Driving
PUBLISHED BY: GT Interactive
DEVELOPED BY: Reflections
ORIGIN: United Kingdom
OF CD'S: 1
AVAILABLE: NOW!

DRIVER

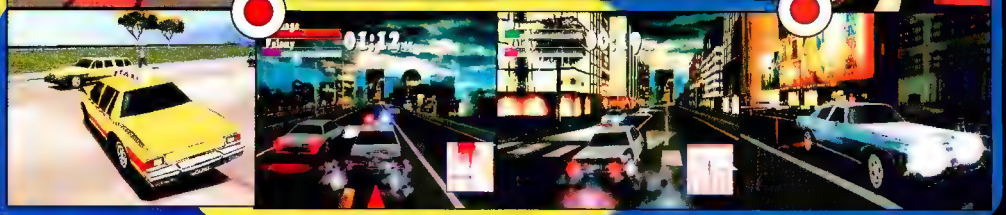


TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

GT Interactive's Driver was on my short list of "must-have" games for this summer. After months and months of screen shots and early code, we finally received a reviewable build (just as the production copies were shipping to stores — hey, it happens). Needless to say, I've put some quality time behind the wheel as an undercover driver for hire and have come out satisfied, yet a little disappointed at the same time — allow me to explain.

For starters, Reflections (the game's developers) should be commended for creating such an amazing engine on the PlayStation. The game is comprised of scaled-down, 3D representations of four real-world metropolitan locations — Miami, San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York — and each comes packed with plenty of traffic, pedestrians and police cars that behave, for the most part, just like they would in real life; traffic lights go from green to red, cars will make full stops at intersections and use their blinkers, and committing traffic violations in front of a cop will definitely get you into trouble. In addition to these huge, go-anywhere, sprawling cities, Reflections incorporated their award-winning physics models into the game (for those of you too young to remember, Reflections was the team responsible for Psygnosis' Destruction Derby series). These cars move, control and behave just as if you were behind the wheel of the real thing and, of course, they display visible damage. Some other nice touches include streaking lights at night (similar to Namco's R4), weather effects, all sorts of environmental debris to plow your car through, visible transitions from day to night and great disco music (I think that's an oxymoron).

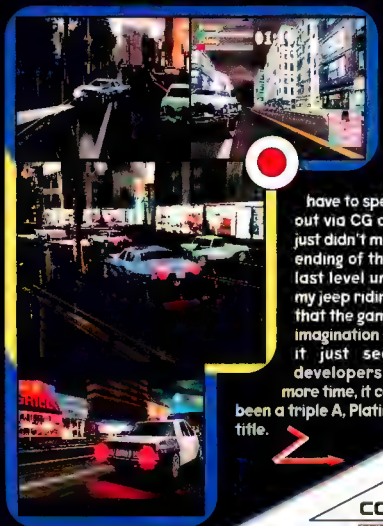
The premise of the game — going undercover as a driver for the mob — is a cool one indeed. And, setting the game during the gritty, big hair, born to be alive, wood grain days of the '70's makes it that much cooler. Like Donnie Brasco, it's up to you to gain the trust of the criminals you're trying to take down. This can only be done by successfully completing a set of "jobs" they offer up. These jobs are solicited through your answering machine back at your apartment/hotel and, sometimes, you have two or three to choose from, at your discretion. Every job revolves around driving a car from point A to B, and the variety comes from what you have to do while you're driving. While I would say that 75% of the missions have you attempting to beat the clock to a location while shaking the police off your tail (similar, in conception, to the driving portion in Fox's Die Hard Trilogy), there are some truly inspired moments. One of my favorites had me picking up an unsuspecting rival gang member in a taxi, then attempting



to scare the hell out of him by driving recklessly. Another cool mission involved me following a monorail car in order to pick up its occupant before the cops did.

In addition to the Undercover mode of the game, Driver has a pretty in-depth Film Direction mode where you can create and watch your own movie-style replays of some of your best missions. Using a set of icons at the top of the screen, you'll be able to place cameras wherever you want. It's entirely possible to position cameras to follow your car, zoom in on the action, pan and fly by, or attach them to other objects; including cars and pedestrians. The end result can be very cool, with close-to-broadcast-quality replays (similar to Gran Turismo's) that really do capture the flavor of some of cinema's most intense chase scenes. While this bonus feature is a nice addition to the game — allowing would-be directors and programmers to have some fun while experimenting with various camera angles and editing techniques — I found that I would rather let Driver's Auto Director make the replay, watch it once, then get back into the game. Although, now that I've beaten the game, I'll mess with the Film Direction mode some more.

As I mentioned before, Driver gets top scores in the graphic and music departments, but there are some nagging things that keep it from achieving greatness. Unfortunately, the game has plenty of pop-up (some of the skyscrapers and buildings appear out-of-nowhere right in front of your face), but I guess it's excusable when you consider the amount of polygons the game is pushing. Additionally, the frame rate really takes a hit when there are multiple cars on screen (which is just about all of the time), or when there are weather effects. Maybe with a few more months of polish and optimization, flaws like this would have been fixed. The difficulty also seems unbalanced. Some missions early on seemed almost impossible to beat, while the last few I breezed through on my first try. It seemed luck came more into play than skill. Those aside, my biggest complaint about the game is that it just feels incomplete and a bit rough around the edges. The front end (title screen, glue screens, etc.) is really rudimentary and not user friendly at all. Saving your game and navigating the menus can be quite a chore and there is plenty of waiting while the game loads. Why not include an auto save feature so you don't have to spend the extra down time between levels? And the story, played out via CG cut scenes and messages on your answering machine, just didn't make any sense. Lastly, I was insulted with the abrupt ending of the game. I didn't even know I was playing the last level until I got the twenty second cinema of my jeep riding off into the sunset. Again, it's not that the game is bad by any stretch of the imagination — it's really quite good — it just seems like, if the developers had a little more time, it could have been a triple A, Platinum title.



BOTTOM LINE

It seems to me that Driver could and should have been one of the few, elite, must-own driving games released for the PlayStation this year, but just didn't quite make the grade. While there is plenty to like and enjoy about the title, it unfortunately doesn't live up to the hype that proceeded its release. Even though it's a bit unpolished and rough around the edges, I would still gladly recommend Driver to just about everyone with the caveat that you might be a little disappointed after logging in some play time behind the wheel.

SCORE

90%

COMPATIBILITY

1 Player | Analog Control Compatible | Vibration Function Compatible

REVIEWED BY:
DILLION MERZ

GENRE:	Music
PUBLISHED BY:	Sony
DEVELOPED BY:	Garage
ORIGIN:	Japan
# OF CD'S:	1
AVAILABLE:	NOW!

UM JAMMER LAMMY

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Over the last several issues of the mag, you have undoubtedly been reading up on Um Jammer. It all comes down to this – our thoughts on the game! What's Um Jammer Lammy all about... and, more importantly, can she compare to her predecessor, Parappa?

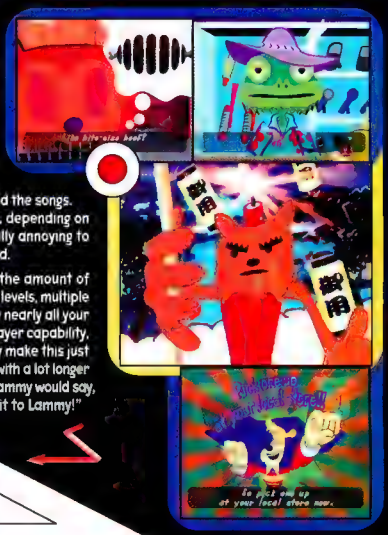
Parappa was a winning combination of rap and cartoony fun, Lammy tries to stick to that same formula. But, instead of a rapping dog, we get a guitar-playing lamb. Baaaaack to the story (and no more lame lamb references), Lammy is running late for her band's (Milkcan) gig. The trials she must endure as she tries to make it to the show on-time are wackier than the defendants on Judge Judy. In all cases, she makes use of her guitar skills, playing licks on everything from babies to chainsaws. As Lammy makes her way to the show, she picks up valuable tools that aid in making some fairly realistic guitar sounds. We're talking effects like a wah-wah, harmonizer, and distortion pedal.

Lammy's story keeps on track and is well animated in the same style that Parappa was done. Paper thin cartoons running around brightly colored backgrounds would be the best way to describe it. It takes place in the same universe and you will recognize many of the characters as you advance into the later stages. Lammy has 7 levels to play her way through with gameplay that is exactly the same as Parappa. That means pressing the right button at just the right time.

The song selection varies widely with classic hard rock tunes, to soft-sung ballads, to pop numbers. The songs definitely are not as catchy or as fun as Parappa's were. However, there are one or two that will get stuck in your head (especially after you fly the plane, soldier!). Playing guitar notes is also a bit different than busting a rhyme. I found it to be equally as cool and it ends up sounding (musically) a lot nicer than even my best Parappa tries.

The great thing about Um Jammer is that, once you play through as Lammy, you open up Parappa and get to use him! Parappa gets entirly new cut-scenes that have absolutely nothing to do with one another, or the story, but they rock all the same. The original Lammy songs have also been remixed to allow for Parappa to rap them. Very cool! On top of that, Um Jammer also includes a two player cooperative mode and a versus mode that lets you play against a friend (or the computer) in either of two ways. 1. Lammy vs. Lammy or 2. Lammy vs. Parappa. I found these two player games to be the most fun, having to switch off between two rockers is a total blast.

The game also boasts some nifty options; you can mess with the difficulty, choosing easy allows you to simply press up on the d-pad to keep your rating good. Great for getting by those frustrating stages or just impressing your friends. Additionally, all stages can be saved and replayed at any time. And, in keeping true to the guitar world, the shoulder buttons allow Lammy to apply a little vibrato (bend) to her notes.



I found Um Jammer a lot more difficult to master than Parappa. The songs are a lot more challenging and there is a lot of memorization and quick finger work required this time around. The only problem I found with Lammy is that it is an ear strain to understand the songs. The vocals seemed to be soft and tough to hear – also, depending on your musical preference, some of the songs can be really annoying to have to listen to multiple times 'cause they ain't so good.

SCORE:
Extreme
X
SATTOO'S CHOICE

90%

BOTTOM LINE

If you thought Parappa was da bomb, then Um Jammer is a no brainer. Sure the songs may not all be great, but you can play guitar and rap your way through the game! The two player options will keep this one in your PlayStation for a good long while. My only hope is that the next installment lets us take control of my favorite carnivore, PJ Berri. "Bite-size beef."

While the songs may not equal Parappa's, the amount of gameplay here surely makes up for it. More levels, multiple playable characters, appearances by nearly all your favorite Parappa stars, multiplayer capability, and solid music gameplay make this just as fun as Parappa, with a lot longer shelf life. As Lammy would say, "Leave it to Lammy!"

COMPATIBILITY

1or2 Players
Vibration Function Compatible

GENRE:	Adventure
PUBLISHED BY:	Jaleco
DEVELOPED BY:	Tonkinhouse
ORIGIN:	Japan
# OF CD'S:	1
AVAILABLE:	August

REVIEWED BY:
CHRIS KRAMER

JUGGERNAUT

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

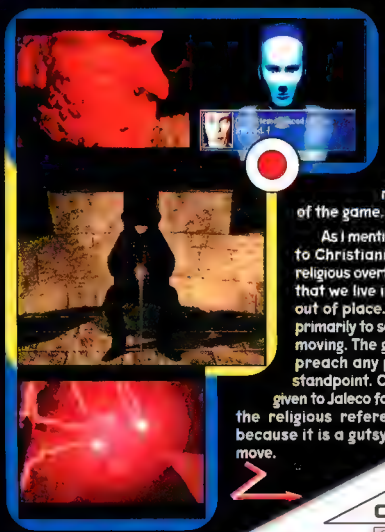
Way back when, in the days near the dawn of the CD-ROM, people wondered what would fill all that space. It wasn't long, however, before a group of intrepid programmers came to the rescue and developed Myst — a game with pretty visuals and a decent story but absolutely no gameplay. The gamers hated it, but the masses loved it and the multimedia PC became a common household good.

Juggernaut is best described as a Myst clone, only this game is a little darker and written with a slightly more mature audience in mind. As the game begins, you are summoned to the house of your girlfriend by a Catholic priest. It turns out that your girlfriend has been possessed by a demon and only her true love (that being you) can save her soul from eternal damnation. However, if you attempt to free her and fail, you will both spend eternity as Satan's slaves. Sounds pleasant, doesn't it?

Movement throughout the game is done via a small cursor. When the cursor is on-screen, it indicates the directions that are available to you. If you want to move, simply press the direction button. The current area can always be searched by moving the cursor around on screen. If the cursor moves over something that can be analyzed further, it will change shape. Clicking a button when the cursor is over one of these "hot spots" will reveal a clue or an FMV sequence that will further the story.

The main portion of the story is told via text boxes on screen. Although the translation can be poor at times (there are many instances of bad English), the text is never incomprehensible. The clues in the game are understandably cryptic, but a little searching around will usually reveal the answer. In terms of difficulty, the puzzles are about average. There are a few points where you will be racking your brains, but in others the solution is obvious. If you're a fan of this genre, then you know what to expect. If not, the best way to describe it, is to say it is akin to a choose-your-own-adventure book. You can't really die in this game, you can only get stuck on a particular puzzle. If something seems too difficult, a short break from the game will usually reveal the answer.

One major problem with the game is the representation of movement throughout the world. The game is played from the first person perspective and, like Myst, you can only move from point to point along a preset number of paths. Thing is, sometimes the game shows you adventuring down that path and other times you only see a few different still frames to indicate movement. This inconsistency in the display can result in players becoming easily disoriented. Thankfully, there is a mapping function included in the game.



Surprisingly, a strong point in Juggernaut is the music and sound effects. The game doesn't hit you over the head with a soundtrack. Instead, it relies on light, ambient music and environmental sounds. This background noise isn't immediately noticeable, but it does add to the atmosphere of the game.

As I mentioned earlier, Juggernaut makes blatant references to Christianity. While it is unusual for a game to have such religious overtones (due more to the politically correct society that we live in more than anything else), here it is not out of place. The religious references are used primarily to setup the story and get the game moving. The game itself doesn't really preach any particular religious standpoint. Credit has to be given to Jaleco for including the religious references because it is a gutsy move.

BOTTOM LINE

Like Myst, Juggernaut is not for the "hardcore" gamers. Instead, it is going to appeal to the mainstream audience. This is for those players who actually enjoy non-twitch games. If you can't live without your daily dose of Quake, then this game is not for you. If, however, the prospect of a slow moving adventure is appealing and you don't mind using your gray matter, then consider taking a look at Juggernaut. This isn't going to be a bestseller, but it will likely sell a few copies.

SCORE: X

79%

COMPATIBILITY

1 Player

Vibration Function Compatible

REVIEWED BY:
MARK ANROVICH

CHOCOBO RACING

GENRE:	Racing
PUBLISHED BY:	Square EA
DEVELOPED BY:	Squaresoft
ORIGIN:	Japan
# OF CD'S:	1
AVAILABLE:	NOW!

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Even though Square is known primarily for their RPG's, they've tried their hand at shooters (Einhander) and fighting games (Tobal #1, Bushido Blade) as well. Chocobo Racing is their first entry into the racing genre, but unfortunately the game isn't as polished as their other non-RPG efforts.

As we've come to expect from Square, the game opens with a great CG introduction. Of course, no game actually looks like the intro, but Chocobo Racing doesn't even come close. The colors seem faded and the characters themselves are sprite-based, rather than polygonal. Worse, the game suffers from clipping, draw-in, polygonal warping, and visible seams. Sometimes it looks as if the CPU is barely able to draw the background scenery before you get there.

Gameplay-wise, the vehicles handle well even though the analog controller can only be used to steer. There are eight characters to choose from initially, including Chocobo and Mog, with more available after you have completed the various modes. Each character is assigned an ability such as accelerating, gripping, flying, and stealing magic stones. "Magic stones" are weapons which include ice, fireball, lightning strike, and shield. Each has three stages of power and you can carry more than one at a time.

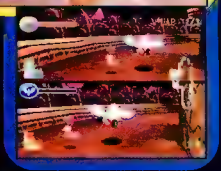
Although the weapons may sound good in print, in practice they are disappointing. Most are offensive, not defensive, leaving you open to attacks which are nearly impossible to avoid. As for the offensive weapons, you rarely get to see them work since they either drop on the road behind you or hit a target out of sight. In addition, since the magic stones trail behind your vehicle once collected, they can be knocked off by other characters far too easily.

Chocobo Racing features five different modes of play. In the Grand Prix, you compete for total points by racing on four courses. There is a Time Attack mode, a Vs. mode, which is your basic one-on-one race, and a Story mode which takes you through the various raceways and characters. There is also a Relay Race in which you select three characters and then race them in consecutive laps on the same course. A multi-player battle mode is not included. While you can shoot weapons at other characters in each mode, you are limited to only two human players and there are no arenas or special tracks made just for battling. There are seven initial courses, but the designs are quite derivative of games we've seen before. There's a basic oval, a mine level, a volcanic mountain, and a haunted castle, for example. There are shortcuts in most of the courses, but they are not hidden. Although there is some limited animation in the background, the courses are not interactive. One course has a cage that falls down on the track, but that's it.

So far the game sounds like it would be a great title for kids, right? Not exactly. Some of the courses feature tight spirals and 90 degree angle turns which the CPU-controlled players will have no problems navigating (unlike you). CPU opponents also have an uncanny ability to run you over and take your weapons. Unfortunately, there is no option to adjust the game's difficulty for younger players.

The music is fine, and there are neat pop-up book effects in the Story mode, but I couldn't find anything else to really get me hooked on the game. Even the ability to unlock hidden FF characters wasn't that interesting, since the underlying game is still the same.

If you're keeping score, so far we've got dated-looking graphics, uninteresting courses, and opponents who can unfairly maneuver better than you can. Oh yeah — and I almost forgot to mention that the game plays pretty slow. It isn't that the frame rate is horrendous, it's just that the vehicles never seem to move very fast.



SCORE:

BOTTOM LINE

Chocobo Racing isn't bad, but it isn't great either. More polished graphics, a battle mode, and better course designs would have done the trick- but that's pretty much the whole game, isn't it? Fans of Mario Kart-style racing — with fantasy courses, cartoonish characters, and an emphasis on speed and weapons over physics — will have to keep waiting. Fortunately, the upcoming Crash Team Racing seems destined to top all prior PlayStation cart racing efforts (including this one).

COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2 Players | Analog Controller Compatible | Vibration Function Compatible

GENRE:	Adventure
PUBLISHED BY:	Konami
DEVELOPED BY:	Konami
ORIGIN:	Japan
# OF CD'S:	1
AVAILABLE:	August

REVIEWED BY: **CHRIS KRAMER**

SOUL OF THE SAMURAI

Japan's feudal history has always been a major source of fascination for me. I love the crazy rules of engagement and nobly weird battles, where the winners were just as likely to kill themselves out of some oblique sense of dishonor as take their spoils. While there have been a number of video games in the past with samurai and ninja themes, none of them have managed to capture the dynamic motion and viscous grace of a sword battle (with the possible exception of Bushido Blade, but that wasn't really much of a game). With Soul of the Samurai, however, Konami has come as close as anyone else has to bringing the action and style of samurai cinema to a 3D game.

There may be a tendency to dismiss Soul of the Samurai as "Resident Evil with swords," but that's only because we game reviewers like things to fit within neat little packages. Like the RE series, Soul has 3D characters moving through static 2D, pre-rendered backgrounds. The gameplay itself is of a much faster pace than RE, with as many as four enemies popping up on screen at a time, all interested in spilling your blood. The pacing of the action is dictated by the elements of Bushido, however; while multiple opponents will challenge you on each screen, they will attack one at a time, which is very important to the game's blocking mechanic.

In Soul of the Samurai, you play as either Kotaro, a smirking Ronin, or Lin, a young female ninja. Both characters have come to a small town on the coast of medieval Japan for different reasons, but find themselves enmeshed in a plot to overthrow the Emperor through the twin demons of magic and gold. The entire town is quickly overrun by "soul bugs," magical slugs that turn people into mindless zombies. Kotaro and Lin each take a separate path to find out where these bugs are coming from.

As you progress in level, your character will learn new special attacks, which use a certain amount of power from the blue meter on the left side of the screen. These special attacks are also dependent on the weapon you're currently using, as some swords give you access to new moves. Both characters also have "desperation attacks," which are very powerful specials that can only be pulled off when you're near death. These last-ditch moves are spectacular; when Kotaro pulls off his Phoenix attack, the screen flashes white, the camera pulls in for a dramatic shot of the action and a geyser of blood splashes across the background. Nice and gruesome.

I was really expecting this to be a much shorter game, but I was pleasantly surprised by the end result. As puzzling as it seems, a lot of Japanese game developers have this notion that they can cover up for lack of depth in their game by giving you multiple characters to play through the exact same game. I was mentally prepared for Soul to wimp out in similar fashion, but I was very happy to find that the two characters have almost completely different games. Their stories and paths do cross at certain points, but the action and settings are much different. Soul of the Samurai also has one of the most unique and cool endings I've ever seen in a game, but I won't ruin it for you. I'll only say that you need to play through to the end with both characters in order to really experience the game in its entirety.

BOTTOM LINE

Soul of the Samurai isn't Metal Gear Solid, but it does provide fun on the level of the first Resident Evil, without all the challenging puzzles and constant backtracking. If you enjoy samurai and ninja movies, like Akira Kurosawa's great body of work (Seven Samurai, Rashomon, etc.) or hyper-kinetic anime fare like Manga Video's Ninja Scrolls, Soul of the Samurai is perfect for you. Cool special moves, a big arsenal of new weapons to be discovered and a crazy ending make this a perfect late Summer game to get you through until the big releases at the end of the year.

SCORE: SILVER X

86%

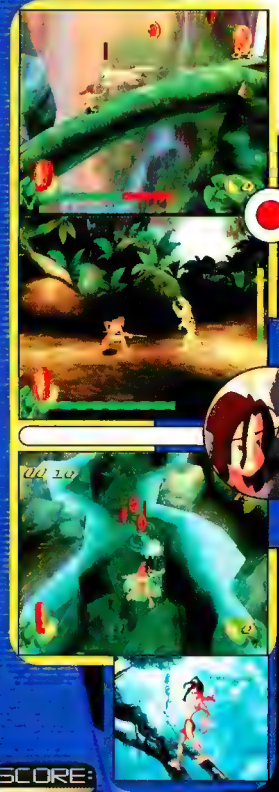
COMPATIBILITY

1 Player | Analog Control Compatible | Vibration Function Compatible

REVIEWED BY:
ALEX ANDREWS

TARZAN

GENRE:	Action/Platform
PUBLISHED BY:	Sony
DEVELOPED BY:	Eurocom
ORIGIN:	United Kingdom
# OF CD'S:	1
AVAILABLE:	NOW!



GENRE:	Adventure
PUBLISHED BY:	Agetec
DEVELOPED BY:	UEP Systems
ORIGIN:	Japan
# OF CD'S:	1
AVAILABLE:	NOW!

REVIEWED BY:
ADAM PAVLACKA

EXrated

RISING ZAN
THE SAMURAI GUNMAN

TEEN
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Mixing select bits of the American West of the 1800's and Japanese Samurai culture, Rising Zan is one part humor and one part adventure. Set in the old west, it follows the adventures of the "Super Ultra Sexy Hero Zan." Now, if you can say that with a straight face, you're probably too anal to appreciate the humor in the game. If not, then you'll have some fun.

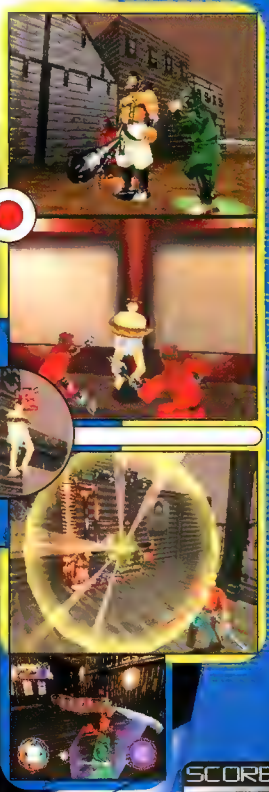
Super Ultra Sexy Hero Zan is the new name of the man formerly known as Johnny. It seems that Johnny's gun-slinging skills were legendary, but his fighting skills were not. After being badly beaten one day, Johnny headed off to Japan, where he learned the Samurai ways and was reborn as Zan. Zan returned to his hometown to find it taken over by bandits and the people enslaved. The only thing to do was be a hero.

Rising Zan is a third person action-adventure. As Zan, you have use of both a gun and a katana. Either one can be used at any time, but the use of the katana earns you "cool" points. Use the gun too much in a level and you'll be branded a chicken. Not something appropriate for a hero.

The game begins with an optional training level. The training level is surprisingly well done, and gives you a feel for the game. All the necessary moves – including special moves – are taught here. After going through the training level, even a novice should be able to play well.

Defeating normal enemies will increase Zan's hero meter. Akin to the power meter in Capcom's Street Fighter Alpha series, the hero meter can be increased three levels. Each level of the hero meter allows Zan to enter "Hustle" mode. Hustle mode doubles Zan's speed and increases the length of his sword (insert Freudian reference here). Zan is also given unlimited use of his special attacks. It is possible to dish out insane amounts of damage while in Hustle mode.

Gameplay is not terribly challenging, but the levels can be relatively long and Zan only has one life. If you die, it is back to the beginning of the last level. This can be mildly annoying if you die while fighting the level boss, but it is somewhat necessary. The overall game is relatively short and, on normal, the enemies aren't terribly difficult. A decent player could get through this fairly quickly. Thankfully, the game does have some replay value in the form of "rewards." Going through the game in normal mode opens up the first reward, going through again will open up more.



The story in Rising Zan is told via cinema scenes in between the levels. Be prepared to groan, but be assured it is intended. The cinemas are done in the style of western movies, with a '90's slant. The voice acting is actually well done, and the soundtrack music is easy on the ears. Zan even has his own theme song, which plays at the appropriate times.

My only complaint about Rising Zan is, unfortunately, a big one. To put it succinctly, the in-game camera is just terrible. Most of the time the camera isn't too bad because Zan is outdoors. Every time Zan goes indoors, or enters an enclosed space, though, the camera is a hindrance. For example, if you're in an enclosed room fighting a boss and you move towards the outer walls, the camera will remain behind you, facing the wall. If you try to run around the enemy, the same thing will happen. Turn around to face your opponent and the camera will stay in place. There is a "camera" reset button, which is supposed to focus the camera on the current opponent, but it doesn't seem to work. The poor camera angles make sections of the game much more difficult than they should be.

SCORE:

BOTTOM LINE

Rising Zan's unique mix of action and offbeat humor really work well in injecting a breath of fresh air into an otherwise stale genre. If the game had a controllable camera like most third person adventure games, it would have easily been Gold. As it is, the game is good, but not great.

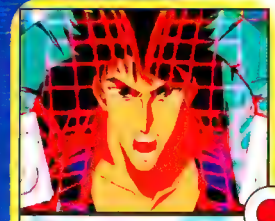
COMPATIBILITY

1 Player | Analog Control Compatible | Vibration Function Compatible

REVIEWED BY:
ADAM PAVLACKA

EVIL ZONE

GENRE:	Fighting
PUBLISHED BY:	Titus
DEVELOPED BY:	Yukes
ORIGIN:	Japan
# OF CD'S:	1
AVAILABLE:	NOW!



TEEN
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

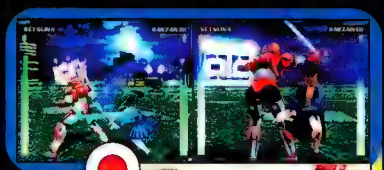
You always know a game is going to be bad when a publisher fails to send out review copies. These "stealth launches" are usually used when a publisher wants to rack up some sales numbers before the negative reviews start rolling in. We could have passed this one over easily, but Greg decided that I was having too much fun with Wipeout 3, so he sent me to the store armed with $50. My mission was to acquire a copy of the game and review it. After an evening of searching, I had the shiny black disc and was playing Evil Zone.

The story behind the game is as cookie-cutter as they come. A half-naked, good-looking, but terribly evil woman named Ihadurca has been terrorizing the nice people of I-Praseru (otherwise known as Happy Island). Desperate to end the threat, the people gathered together and trapped Ihadurca in the Evil Zone. Unfortunately, it was only to be a temporary measure. In order to end the threat, they called upon heroes from all over. These heroes were to compete against each other to determine who would fight, and destroy, Ihadurca.

To call Evil Zone a good fighting game is like saying the Saturn was a successful gaming machine. Evil Zone has about as much depth as a wading pool. Combat in the game is handled with all of two buttons – a guard button and an attack button. Because of the limited amount of buttons, combat is extremely simple. If you are close to an enemy and you hit the attack button, you will try some sort of swipe attack. If you are at a distance and hit the attack button, your character will execute a ranged attack. If you want to get really fancy, you can press a direction on the D-pad before hitting attack. This will cause your character to execute a special move.

The guard button is annoying, because it is a total guard. When guarding, characters are near impervious to attacks. For example, if you start beating on the computer it will go into the guard position and no damage whatsoever will be taken off. This makes the game extremely friendly to players who like to turtle.

Visually, Evil Zone is passable, but nothing special. The game looks dated by today's standards and just can't compare to the likes of a Namco fighting game. About the only part of the game that looks good is the opening FMV. Sadly enough, the opening movie also reveals the amount of work that went into translating this game – just about nothing. If you watch the opening movie, the original Japanese title is still intact. The American title of Evil Zone doesn't appear until you reach the first menu screen. Would it have been that hard to update the opening FMV?



Also suffering from the poor translation work are the vocals. All of the voices in the game sound as if they were recorded over a telephone instead of in a sound studio. If there was an award for poor voice acting, Evil Zone would win hands down. You might think voice acting isn't that big of a deal, but the voices are what moves the story along. Before each fight, a prologue is shown and the voice-over tells the story. Why not just watch the visuals? Because the visuals are nearly non-existent. Instead of recording an FMV, or even scripting something with the game engine, Titus used a slide-show. That's right, a bunch of still images, one every few seconds. The use of a slide show might be appropriate in an old-school 16-bit game, but not in a third generation PlayStation title.

I should probably also mention that analog support and vibration features are missing from the game as well. No surprise, really, considering everything else that is missing.

SCORE:

BOTTOM LINE

Really, about the only thing going for Evil Zone is a nice anime intro, and an evil female with really large breasts. Seeing as how both of those things can be had for free on the net if you bother to search, paying $50 for the game doesn't really seem worthwhile. If you're looking for a good fighting game there are plenty of alternatives available for the PlayStation. The Tekken series, Destrega and Street Fighter EX are three that immediately come to mind. Had Titus actually updated Evil Zone before releasing it in the states, it might have been decent. As it stands however, Evil Zone is a real stinker. I'd offer to give this one away, but I don't think anyone out there would actually take it.

COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2 Players

GENRE:	Retro
PUBLISHED BY:	Konami
DEVELOPED BY:	Konami
ORIGIN:	Japan
# OF CD'S:	1
AVAILABLE:	NOW!

REVIEWED BY:
MARK ANROVICH

KONAMI's 80's AC SPECIAL

EVERYONE
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Until now, the retrogaming genre has been dominated by Namco's Museum series and Midway's Arcade's Greatest Hits series. There is a good reason – the most popular arcade games in the U.S. during the 1980's came almost exclusively from Namco/Midway, Atari and Williams. Most of the lesser-known companies are no longer in business and had just one or two hit games – nowhere near the volume needed for a compilation. Konami may not have been responsible for the most popular classic arcade games, but neither were they a "one hit wonder" company. AC Special brings ten of their best-known coin-ops to the PlayStation.

SCRAMBLE (1981) and SUPER COBRA (1981) are the granddaddies of the horizontally-scrolling shooters. In each, your ship can fire both a straight shot and a dropping missile. You've got to hit fuel tanks on the ground to replenish your energy while avoiding enemy missiles and ships. Just maneuvering through the tight passageways is hard enough, not to mention staring at the day-glow landscapes.

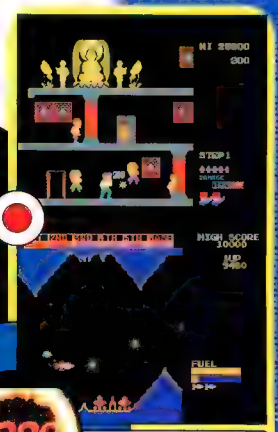
POOYAN (1982) requires you to move a porcine archer being lowered in a basket. Mama pig is trying to protect her piglets from wolves who are using balloons to reach their helpless prey. She uses arrows to pop the balloons and send the wolves to their demise. The game is quite colorful with cartoon music and bonus rounds.

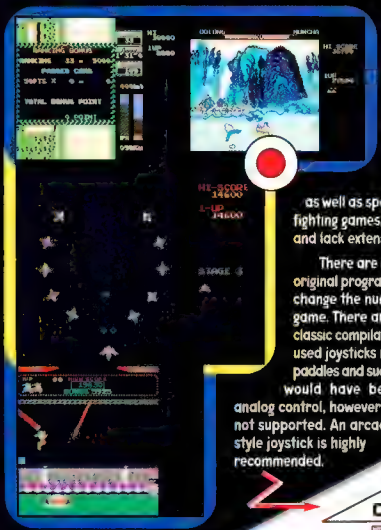
TIME PILOT (1982) is one of Konami's best known games from the era (and also written by the same guy who created Street Fighter). In it, you pilot a plane which is under attack from all sides. After destroying a requisite number of enemies, a larger enemy appears. Destroying that enemy warps you to the next time period, where the enemy planes change their appearance and abilities accordingly.

GYRUSS (1983) was one of my favorite games in the '80's, due to its theme music – Bach's Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor. The game has you piloting a ship and battling enemies on your way from Neptune to Earth. The patterns of the enemies and the challenge stages that appear in the center of the screen are quite reminiscent of Galaga.

ROCK N' ROPE (1983) is an early platform game which requires players to reach a mythical bird at the top of the screen by firing a grappling gun and climbing a rope between ledges. Meanwhile, cavemen and dinosaur enemies attempt to knock you off. You've got to use a flashlight to temporarily disable them, but the strategy involves proper rope placement.

ROAD FIGHTER (1984) is a game I had never heard of. Perhaps it was not released in the U.S. In any event, it plays similar to many old vertically-scrolling racing games. You've got two gears, low and high, and have to avoid oncoming cars and be mindful of twists and turns in the road.





CIRCUS CHARLIE (1984) is another game I don't remember playing. I wish I had – it is quite enjoyable. The game is basically a timing challenge. You've got to jump your circus clown at the appropriate moment to pass through flaming hoops, move from one swinging trapeze to another, etc. The game is quite colorful and features familiar circus tunes.

SHAO-LIN'S ROAD (1985) and YIE AR KUNG-FU (1985) are early entries in the fighting genre. The former is more of a platform game which involves jumping and kicking opponents off of various levels. The latter is a one-on-one fighting game utilizing a kick, punch, and jump, as well as special moves via a combination of the buttons. Unlike later fighting games, however, the characters in Yie Ar Kung Fu are quite tiny and lack extensive animation.

There are no extras, such as picture galleries or interviews with the original programmers. The only featured options are the ability to change the number of levels and number of lives for each game. There are no control issues, unlike some other classic compilations, because the games involved used joysticks rather than trak-balls and paddles and such. Some of the games would have benefited from analog control, however, which is not supported. An arcade-style joystick is highly recommended.

BOTTOM LINE

Although the majority of these games have been released for prior console systems, they have never been identical to their arcade counterparts until now. Konami's '80's AC Special is a decent compilation that makes up for the lack of blockbuster titles through sheer volume.

SCORE: SILVER X

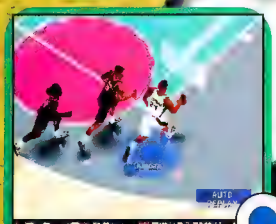
84%

COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2 Players

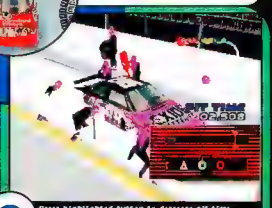
NBA BASKETBALL 2000

GENRE:	Basketball
PUBLISHED BY:	FOX Sports
DEVELOPED BY:	Radical Entertainment
ORIGIN:	USA
# OF CD'S:	1
AVAILABLE:	October



EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

As we have chronicled in the past, FOX Sports Interactive is gearing up to go heavily into the mainstream sports sector of the PlayStation. FOX Sports is bringing hoop and hockey out this year, followed by baseball and football titles next year. Radical Entertainment is the developer for their sports games, and they are leaving no stone unturned as they seek to legitimize their sports franchises. We recently had the opportunity to get a sneak peek at their first two titles, and everything FOX is promising appears to be coming true. Some of the features you'll find in FOX NBA Basketball 2000 include all 31 teams, all 400+ players, all the authentic arenas and uniforms, and everything else that makes an officially licensed NBA product look official. As far as technology is concerned, Radical has implemented a 3D engine that is capable of delivering a quick and smooth frame rate. There will be hundreds of player animations, including tons of different dunks and layups (and MISSED dunks), fade away jumpers and lean-ins. Greg Papa (current play-by-play voice of the Spurs) and Doc Rivers (since doing this has landed the head job in Orlando) will provide the audio entertainment. Obviously, because of the FOX Sports TV association, the game will feature many of the graphics of the FOX Sports Net broadcasts, including the Sports Ticker and FOX Scope.



EA Sports and developer Stormfront Studios are back at it with their third installment of the popular NASCAR series, aptly named NASCAR 2000. The new NASCAR has a host of new features and options, including new hi-rez car models, revamped computer AI and physics model, a two player season mode, five new fantasy road courses, and the ability to customize your racing season. This mode looks cool – you can choose to race your season on just the short tracks, super speedways, or only the road courses! Another nifty new feature is the interactive pit stop. When you pull into the pit, a row of icons will scroll across the bottom of the screen. If you press the correct icon on your controller as it passes the highlighted area on screen, you can shave valuable seconds off of your pit time (the folks at EA have dubbed this the "Parappa the Pit Stop" mode). NASCAR 2000 includes 33 active drivers and cars (updated for the 1999 season) and 18 official tracks (Atlanta, Homestead, Pocono, Sears Point, just to name a few). Night driving is available at three courses: Charlotte, Bristol, and Richmond International (as well as some of the fantasy road courses). NASCAR 2000 still comes packed with the ability to customize everything under the sun – even fuel load! Lastly, there is a secret track that can be unlocked if you can beat "The King", Richard Petty, on his favorite tracks!

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

NASCAR 2000

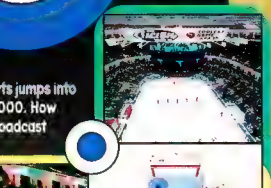
GENRE:	Racing
PUBLISHED BY:	EA
DEVELOPED BY:	Stormfront Studios
ORIGIN:	USA
# OF CD'S:	1
AVAILABLE:	September

NHL 2000

GENRE: Hockey
PUBLISHED BY: EA
DEVELOPED BY: EA Sports
ORIGIN: Canada
OF CD'S: 1
AVAILABLE: October

EA Sports is hoping that NHL 2000 can bring back all of the excitement and gameplay of the old NHL series from the 16 bit days. One way they hope to make video game hockey players feel all warm and fuzzy is by adding more fighting to the mix. Also new for 2000 is a 'big hit' and 'big deke' button, awarding players for being more aggressive. NHL 2000 has an improved frame rate as well as smoother control (that's what we're told; we'll let you know for sure in the review!). The really big news (at least from the Dimension Publishing camp) is that the NHL franchise has finally added an icon Passing system, which we've felt has hindered the series for years. NHL 2000 also features real NHL players faces, although we don't how many or who – but you'll know when we know! The commentary duo of Bill Clement and Jim Hughson bring all the action through your speakers. There's also a new Fantasy Mode with dispersal draft for those of you that appreciate that sort of feature, and there's the usual career mode that can turn one season into an entire career (although we've never actually heard from anyone who's ever tried an option like that!).Look for the hockey wars to really melt the ice beginning in October.

The NHL FaceOff series from 989 Sports will have a tough time holding onto its crown as the best hockey game on the PlayStation. EA Sports is banking hard on bringing back the magic from their Genesis heyday, and FOX Sports jumps into the fire with their first hockey title, FOX NHL Hockey 2000. How will they try, you ask? For starters, 989 is bringing back the broadcast tandem of Mike Emrick and Darren Pang. That combination worked well last year, providing the commentary that one magazine called the "the best ever" (uh, PSExtreme?). In addition, the player animations have been increased by over 150 (how do they keep on doing that?), and there's a new AI system that 989 has trademarked called iCE AI. I see "ice" and think "ice ice baby", but the folks at 989 see Intelligent Comprehension Execution. Ah. We just hope it means that we'll still be able to get the puck between the pipes! NHL FaceOff 2000 will also use the "Halo Puck", allowing players to better find the puck when it gets in those hard to reach areas (back between the molars). There are new arena models that feature championship banners and Jumbotrons, and crowds that cheer and boo at the appropriate time (and they'll even throw hats for a hat trick). Sounds like a good start!



NHL FACEOFF 2000

GENRE: Hockey
PUBLISHED BY: 989 Sports
DEVELOPED BY: Killer Games
ORIGIN: USA
OF CD'S: 1
AVAILABLE: October

NHL CHAMPIONSHIP 2000

GENRE:	Hockey
PUBLISHED BY:	FOX Sports
DEVELOPED BY:	Radical Entertainment
ORIGIN:	USA
# OF CD'S:	1
AVAILABLE:	October

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

FOX Sports Interactive and developer Radical Entertainment will make NHL Championship 2000 their first entry into the PlayStation's popular sports category. Many of you will remember Radical as the developer of the PowerPlay hockey series published by Virgin a few years back. Well, this time around, Radical has brought a completely new 3D hockey engine to power the new game and, from what we've seen so far, the game looks to be headed on the right blade. Much like FOX's NBA hoop game, NHL Championship 2000 is officially licensed and will contain all of the real NHL teams and players. The game will feature the FOX Sports Net Broadcasting style, and will include play-by-play and color from FOX Sports announcers John Davidson and Kenny Albert. NHL Championship will have all of the gameplay modes and GM modes that sports gamers have come to expect, like trade and create-a-player, as well as variable season lengths, exhibition games, a World Tournament (18 international teams are included, plus bonus All-Star teams), and adjustable coaching styles. Radical is also implementing a new passing system called "FOX Trax", which allows players to see every pass and every shot on goal, no matter what the position of the player might be. Look for a complete review of all the hockey titles in the next issue of PSExtreme (or the one after that!).

Things seem to be looking up for the Madden series from EA Sports – this year's version has a whole slew of new features never before seen in a console gridiron game. Madden 2000 sports a faster frame rate this time around, and manages to do it while increasing the polygon count on the players, and doubling up on the number of player animations. You'll see big ol' offensive linemen, skinny wide outs, and muscular runningbacks. Of course, the new feature that we think will really increase the replay factor is the addition of a "situation creator". There are two ways to use this mode; 1) create your own situation from scratch, or 2) the computer will give you a situation and you'll have to deal with. For example, if you want to see if you can lead the Bears on a 95 yard march for a TD (against any team you choose) with 58 seconds left, you can do it! Other new additions to the franchise include the Madden Challenge (where you have to accomplish certain tasks, like running for a 20 yard gain or throwing a 40 TD pass, in order to gain access to secret teams). Players can now go on hot or cold streaks, there's the ability to lead your receiver to a particular spot, and there are tons of audio clips that contain many taunts and celebrations!

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

MADDEN NFL 2000

GENRE:	Football
PUBLISHED BY:	EA
DEVELOPED BY:	EA Sports
ORIGIN:	USA
# OF CD'S:	1
AVAILABLE:	September

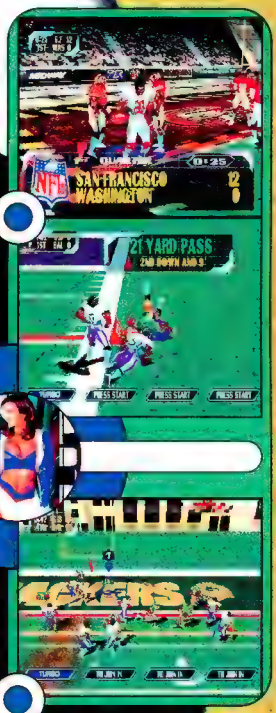
GENRE:	Football
PUBLISHED BY:	Midway
DEVELOPED BY:	Atari Games / Midway
ORIGIN:	USA
# OF CD'S:	1
AVAILABLE:	Now

REVIEWED BY:
ERIC WINDING

BLITZ 2000

Midway gave the public what they wanted last year when they brought their hugely (is that REALLY a word?) popular arcade game, NFL Blitz, to the home, via the PlayStation and Nintendo 64. Since that time, Midway has brought NFL Blitz 99 to the arcade and has also been working on their home sequels. Thus, what we have for your review reading pleasure today is NFL Blitz 2000 — a game that is remarkably similar to the original, yet at the same time manages to captivate the gamer with some of its new features.

The biggest change for Blitz 99 in the arcade was the addition of two more joysticks on the control panel. Well, Johnny, Midway has also given PlayStation owners the chance to hook up four controllers to their gray box, allowing for the mayhem to be spread out amongst you and three of your cronies. All four of you can play together on the same team, go 3-on-1, or square up and go 2-on-2. The choice, my friends, is yours. Of course, in my opinion, the addition of two more players ISN'T the biggest news for the PSX version, no sir. That honor goes to the inclusion of the new Play Editor, allowing you to design and save up to 12 different offensive and defensive plays that you can use in any of Blitz's gameplay modes. To create your plays, you first choose whether you want to design offensive or defensive plays. Picking offense would then bring up one of three play choices; Normal, Fake FG, or Fake Punt. Let's say you pick Normal, this would then bring up the Formations menu, allowing you to choose from one of 7 different lineups. Of course, when you go into the next option, Edit Routes, you can align the players wherever you want, so the formation limit of 7 is really an artificial number — you could create hundreds! When choosing your routes for the three 'skill' position players (those that can be targeted to catch a pass), you can select one of 7 different actions. For example, you could tell Rice to go up ten yards, SPIN, run to the left five yards, FAKE, then TURBO up field 15 yards and then WAVE for the ball. You can use each of the 7 actions three times per play. So, if you tell Rice to TURBO twice, that only leaves one TURBO for Owens or Hearst.



All in all, I found the Play Editor option to be a big plus for Blitz 2000, and it will add much more replay value than the previous Blitz. Why, you ask? Well, for the obvious reason that it allows the offensive/defensive coordinator in you to test his skills against the computer or a friend. The other reason is because the rest of Blitz 2000 isn't much different than last year's Blitz. Oh sure, there are some new stadiums that add different looks to the grass and astroturf, but the basic feel and flow of the game remain the same (which isn't a bad thing). Blitz 2000, however, does appear to be moving at a higher frame rate, although I don't have the facts to back this up — it just feels as if it does! Another new item worth mentioning is the inclusion of an "On Fire" mode — simply record three catches in a row by the same receiver, or three sacks in succession by your defense, and you'll have the ability to catch anything or get to the QB quicker! Very cool.

Some of the things we would have liked to have seen added for this year's home version included; an instant replay feature, deeper stat tracking, create-a-player, and maybe even the ability to trade players. Alas, none of these options are included in Blitz 2000. I can sort-of understand not putting in some of our 'wish list' ideas because they lean more on the sim side of football games, but you've got to have an instant replay system!

BOTTOM LINE

NFL Blitz 2000 is by no means a revolutionary sequel to the original Blitz. It is, however, a worthy successor to a great playing sports franchise. The addition of the Play Editor is worth the price of admission alone, and you still get all of the big hits and over-the-top gameplay that makes NFL Blitz such a great game.

SCORE:

COMPATIBILITY

1 to 4 Players | Analog Controller Compatible | Vibration Function Compatible

REVIEWED BY: ERIC WINDING

GENRE:	Football
PUBLISHED BY:	989 Sports
DEVELOPED BY:	989 Sports
ORIGIN:	USA
# OF CD'S:	1
AVAILABLE:	Now

NFL XTREME 2

EVERYONE
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

NFL Xtreme 2 from 989 Sports is the sequel to last year's popular arcade style football game (do I need to say – NFL Xtreme?). 989 has taken everything that was good about last year's product and improved upon it, and even removed some of the weaker links from the initial offering. However, as I'll happily describe in the following paragraphs, this doesn't necessarily add up to a Blitz beater.

If you missed NFL Xtreme last summer, here's a brief recap; hi-rez graphics, highly detailed polygon players, over-the-top arcade animations – a 5-on-5 offensive minded football frenzy! The main difference between it and the original Blitz was that Xtreme had an offense where every player was eligible to catch a pass (four icon buttons = four guys to throw to) and Blitz was more of an offensive/defensive battle. Fast forward one year and both games have sequels out that remain true to their heritage.

NFL Xtreme 2 has the same gameplay modes as last year – season, tournament, and playoffs. It also has roster management options (that we wish Blitz 2000 offered) that allow you to create, trade, and draft players. You can even build a completely new team! In my opinion, the main reason for playing Xtreme is to compete in the season, whereas in Blitz you'll likely skip over the season mode and opt for the Arcade mode. The reason? Well, in Xtreme, season mode is what it's all about and, in Blitz, you want to try and beat all 30 teams in the Arcade mode. The stat tracking in Blitz is very minimal, and making your way through an entire season is not all that rewarding (no individual stats to look at) – certainly not when compared to beating the 30 teams (very tough toward the end!). For Xtreme, the stat tracking is deep, and you'll want to check the league leaders after each game. Unfortunately, after only a couple of games into the season, the stats soon became meaningless to me. NFL Xtreme 2 is still 95% offense, and for my tastes, it's 80% running and 20% passing. Since I ran so much, after only 4 games Steve Young led the league with over 1500 yards and the next closest guy had a paltry 93 yards! I toggled over to the Passing Leaders screen and, since I only threw a handful of times each game, I didn't expect to see Steve anywhere near the top 10. Guess what? Not only was he in the top ten, he was ranked #2, just 98 yards behind the leader!

To me, that just isn't right. The stats are all messed up!

Anyway, getting back to the gameplay of Xtreme 2, as I mentioned before, it's strictly an offensive affair. Granted, you'll have defensive stops on occasion but, with the first down markers located where they are (20,40,20), it's tough to make a four down stop when the offense is facing a 1st and 5 situation! Regardless, an arcade style football game should lean toward high scoring games, and Xtreme does that part well. It also does well with the animations (more than 3x as many as last year's Xtreme), sound f/x (tons of taunting and smack talking), and player moves. Like last year, pulling off moves in the right situation can lead to big plays. For instance, I just had a play where I tossed the ball out on the flat to the right, my guy caught it and hit a turbo, spun away from a would be tackler, did a head over heals flip to avoid another defender, then lowered the shoulder and ran over the LB like Bo Jackson running through Brian Bosworth! THAT was sweet!

SCORE: SILVER X

88%

BOTTOM LINE

NFL Xtreme 2 is a fun playing romp through an uncrowded football field. It looks great, plays quick, and has a ton of features that make it an excellent addition to your sports library. However, NFL Blitz 2000 also packs quite a punch, and brings more of an arcade experience to the home video game player, thus just edging out NFL Xtreme 2.

COMPATIBILITY

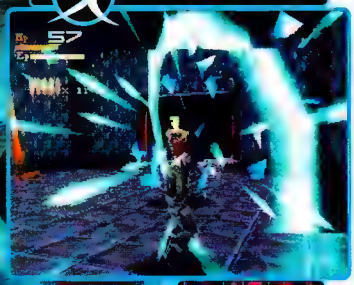
1 or 2 Players | Analog Controller Compatible | Vibration Function Compatible | Multi Tap Adaptor 1 to 8 Players

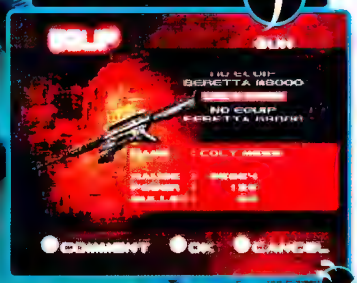
CHECK IT OUT...
www.PSExtreme.com
NEED WE SAY MORE?

probability of u.s. release: possible

title: spriggan lunar verse

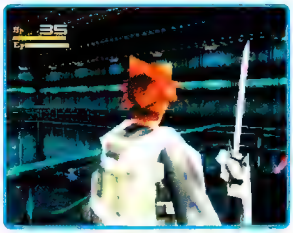
publisher: from software non-english text content: medium



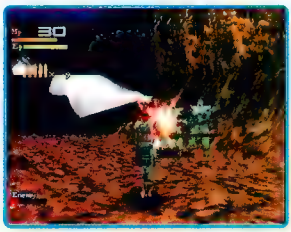


From Software is typically known for their quality titles. Responsible for the King's Field and Armored Core series, this group of Japanese developers have been working with the PlayStation since its inception (the original King's Field — which was never released in the States — was one of the first Japanese launch titles). In fact, From was one of the lucky, chosen few who were given early development kits and specs for the next generation PlayStation hardware in which they created the graveyard and dragon demo shown for the first time in Japan back in March. So, my question is; "what the hell is this piece of crap!?!"

Don't be fooled by the better-than-ok-looking screens you see here, Spriggan: Lunar Verse is really, really, really bad. It seems like the developers were trying to capture the Metal Gear audience by creating a military-style, action/adventure. The story (from what we can gather), has you infiltrating a secret base somewhere, someplace (it wouldn't be secret if we knew), and taking out an unrelenting army of machine gun-toting enemies along the way. Your character seems to come well-prepared — he starts the game with both a pistol and a knife. He is also trained in hand-to-hand combat and can pack quite a whallop with a variety of punches, kicks and special moves. Of course, there are numerous weapons, power-ups (and other sundry items to be found along the way) to help you fufill your mission. There are even a few training levels to help you come to grip with all of your character's abilities — not that they help any.

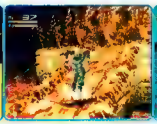


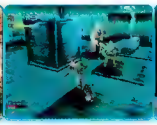
The problem is, the game pretty much just sucks in general. There are so many things wrong with Spriggan that I don't even know where to start. Take the controls, for example. As far as I can tell, there's no auto-targeting function or lock-on button. So, trying to shoot, stab or just plain kick an enemy — who might even be standing right in front of you — can result in hitting nothing but air. Meanwhile, this guy has no problem filling you full of lead at point blank range. This leads to the camera system. There are a few camera modes from which to choose, one worse than the next. The camera, which would work so much better if it just stayed directly behind your character, has to be rotated manually, leaving you in a hitch when you really need to see which way you're actually facing. What's worse, more often than not, it will get stuck behind objects, leaving your view obstructed, again while you're being shot at from a number of different enemies who have no trouble seeing you. Don't even get me started on the rough and rudimentary first-gen graphics. I'm sure I could easily find plenty more to rag on about Spriggan but, after struggling through the training mode, then two or three levels, I had to stop playing in disgust.

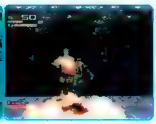


Agetec, whatever you do, please do not pick this game up from Japan. No matter how much tweaking and localization you do, you could never fix it.

GREG







probability of u.s. release: unlikely

title: # tondemo crisis!

publisher: polygon magic

non-english text content: high

Sure, we've all seen our share of hard times. Days when things didn't go quite according to plan. But I would bet that not one of us has ever been faced with as many quirky and outrageous events as you see in Polygon Magic's Tondemo Crisis! The game is a bizarre re-creation of one man's struggle to get through the day, incorporating everything from his home life to on-the-job awareness.

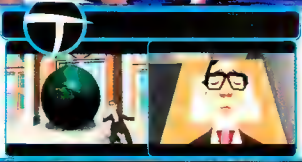
Basically, Tondemo Crisis! is an amalgamation of mini-games, ranging in style from how-fast-can-you-button-mash to are-you-smart-enough-to-answer-math-questions-in-two-seconds? Sounds crazy, huh? Well, it is! It doesn't take long before you really start to feel for the guy. He looks like a typical working stiff and his life ain't easy, that's for sure. The opening sequence finds him nodding off at his desk (kind of like me as I'm writing this). In an effort to stay awake, he gets up and starts grooving. Which is, apparently, a typical practice in Japan, as his co-workers join in the dance party. This part plays out like Bust-A-Groove, having to match controller buttons to the beat, with a little bonus robot freestyle dancing going down in between. For a square, the guy can rock out!

As the day goes on, our hero is chased down the hall by a giant rolling ball (a-la Indiana Jones), bonked on the head by falling debris as he desperately tries to slow down an out of control elevator, thrown out of an ambulance bound to a stretcher, seduced by a fine looking woman, defribilated once or twice for incorrectly answering a few, simple questions, and you can just imagine the rest. Each of the events call for a different style of gameplay and, in-between them, the story unfolds so that everything really meshes together. The mini-games vary, but most are pretty intuitive, and you can get pretty far along without knowing much Japanese.

It's obvious that Polygon Magic, the game's developers, are fans of the slapstick comedy found in some of our old silent movies, as the game definitely takes its inspiration from them. After playing for just a few, short minutes, you'll recognize bits from classics, such as Harold Lloyd's "Safety Last" (the one where he's hanging off the clock twenty stories up) and "The Keystone Cops".

The music in Tondemo Crisis! is provided by Tokyo Ska Paradise Orchestra. If you know anything about ska, then you will realize that it can set the mood for a crazy and wild time. This, it does. Of course, with insane music, you need the graphics to match, and Tondemo pulls through here, as well. The game's cut scenes are all done using its polygon engine and still come away looking smooth and polished.

Tondemo Crisis! is definitely a fun game with a lot of variety. It surely has a Japanese take on things. So, if you are looking to import it, be ready for some possible culture shock. Like Parappa or Um Jammer Lammy, the game is so kooky, and the characters are so endearing, that you'll catch yourself really liking this game. Overall, it's a pretty wacky experience, and one I would especially recommend if you enjoyed Drink! (Pepsi Man). Oi!



DILLION

The EXCAVATE section is where we dig up 12 months worth of ratings and present them on one easy-to-read spread, along with a little explanation/breakdown of our rating system. Use this as your buying guide throughout the year and as a reference for those older games that you might have missed (or wish you had).

PLATINUM GAMES	ISSUE	SCORE
Syphon Filter	March 1999	99%
Ape Escape	July 1999	98%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	December 1998	98%
Medievil	November 1998	98%
Metal Gear Solid	December 1998	98%
NFL Blitz	October 1998	98%
NFL GameDay 99	October 1998	98%
Spyro the Dragon	October 1998	98%
Street Fighter Alpha 3	June 1999	98%
Tomb Raider III	January 1999	98%

GOLD GAMES	ISSUE	SCORE
Croc 2	July 1999	97%
Test Drive 5	December 1998	97%
Bloody Roar 2	May 1999	96%
Bust-A-Groove	January 1999	96%
Civilization II	March 1999	96%
Colony Wars: Vengeance	December 1998	96%
Gex 3: Deep Cover Gecko	May 1999	96%
Jade Cocoon	August 1999	96%
A Bugs Life	December 1998	95%
Akuji: The Heartless	February 1999	95%
Bugs Bunny: Lost in Time	August 1999	95%
Duke Nukem: Time to Kill	December 1998	95%
Kagero: Deception II	December 1998	95%
NCAA GameBreaker 99	January 1999	95%
NHL Face-off 99	December 1998	95%
Rogue Trip	November 1998	95%
Star Ocean: Second Story	June 1999	95%
Abe's Exoddus	February 1999	94%
Fighter Maker	June 1999	94%
Legend of Legaia	April 1999	94%
NBA Live 99	January 1999	94%
Need for Speed: High Stakes	May 1999	94%
Rally Cross 2	January 1999	94%
Ehrgeiz	May 1999	93%
Guilty Gear	December 1998	93%
MLB 2000	June 1999	93%
R-Type Delta	August 1999	93%
Rival Schools	November 1998	93%
Brunswick Pro Circuit Bowling	November 1998	92%
Cool Boarders 3	November 1998	92%
Knockout Kings	January 1999	92%
Lunar: Silver Star Story Complete	July 1999	92%
NCAA Final Four 99	March 1999	92%
Parasite Eve	September 1998	92%
Point Blank 2	April 1999	92%
Streak	December 1998	92%
Tai Fu	April 1999	92%
Tiny Tank: Up your Arsenal	August 1999	92%
Warzone 2100	July 1999	92%
WWF War Zone	September 1998	92%
Assault Retribution	December 1998	91%
Baseball 2000	June 1999	91%
Rollcage	April 1999	91%
Test Drive: Off Road 2	December 1998	91%
Wild 9	December 1998	91%
Bushido Blade 2	November 1998	90%
Bust-A-Move 4	January 1999	90%
Darkstalkers 3	January 1999	90%
Echo Night	August 1999	90%
Freestyle Boardin' '99	March 1999	90%
G Darius	October 1998	90%
Guardian's Crusade	April 1999	90%
Heart of Darkness	September 1998	90%
Kula World	September 1998	90%
Moto Racer 2	November 1998	90%
Ridge Racer Type 4	April 1999	90%
Rug Rats	January 1999	90%
Silent Hill	March 1999	90%
The Fifth Element	December 1998	90%
The Next Tetris	May 1999	90%
The Unholy War	November 1998	90%
Tiny Tank	February 1999	90%

SILVER GAMES	ISSUE	SCORE
Army Men 3D	May 1999	89%
Tenchu	November 1998	89%
Trap Gunner	October 1998	89%

Brigandine	January 1999	88%
C: The Contra Adventure	September 1998	88%
Contender	February 1999	88%
WCW/NWO Thunder	February 1999	88%
Backstreet Billiards	December 1998	87%
Castrol Honda Superbike Racing	July 1999	87%
Madden NFL 99	October 1998	87%
Mr. Domino	February 1999	87%
Rush Down	April 1999	87%
Team Losi RC Racer	October 1998	87%
Uprising X	February 1999	87%
NCAA Football 99	September 1998	86%
NHL 99	December 1998	86%
Ultimate 8 Ball	July 1999	86%
Asteroids	January 1999	85%
Chessmaster II	August 1999	85%
Command & Conquer: Retaliation	October 1998	85%
Destrega	February 1999	85%
Monaco Grand Prix	May 1999	85%
Motorhead	November 1998	85%
Pool Hustler	December 1998	85%
Thunder Force V	October 1998	85%
Fisherman's Bait	April 1999	84%
Populous: The Beginning	June 1999	84%
Resident Evil and Resident Evil 2: Dual Shock	October 1998	84%
S.C.A.R.S.	November 1998	84%
Triple Play 2000	May 1999	84%
Armored Core: Project Phantasma	January 1999	83%
Dragonseeds	December 1998	83%
Grand Theft Auto: London, 1969	June 1999	83%
NASCAR 99	November 1998	83%
Rampage 2: Universal Tour	May 1999	83%
Xenogears	December 1998	83%
Activision Classics	November 1998	82%
Formula 1 98	January 1999	82%
Future Cop: L.A.P.D.	October 1998	82%
Ninja: Shadow of Darkness	November 1998	82%
Running Wild	December 1998	82%
Twisted Metal 3	January 1999	82%
Brave Fencer: Musashi	December 1998	81%
Devil Dice	October 1998	81%
KL Revenge	March 1999	81%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 99	January 1999	81%
Touring Car Championship	September 1998	81%
All Star Tennis '99	June 1999	80%
Blast Radius	February 1999	80%
Irritating Stick	February 1999	80%
Shadow Madness	May 1999	80%
BRONZE GAMES	**ISSUE**	**SCORE**
Animaniacs: Ten Pin Alley	January 1999	79%
Batman and Robin	October 1998	79%
Centipede	July 1999	79%
R-Types	March 1999	79%
Spice World	October 1998	79%
Street Skäer	April 1999	79%
WarGames	September 1998	79%
Alexi Lalas International Soccer	August 1999	78%
Nectaris: Military Madness	February 1999	78%
Dead in the Water	February 1999	76%
Monkey Hero	March 1999	76%
Bottom of the 9th 99	September 1998	75%
High Heat Baseball 2000	July 1999	75%
Master of Monsters: Disciples of Gaia	November 1998	75%
Psybadek	February 1999	75%
Street Fighter Collection 2	October 1998	75%
Bomberman Fantasy Race	May 1999	74%
Crime Killer	September 1998	74%
Small Soldiers	December 1998	74%
Sports Car GT	June 1999	74%
3Xtreme	June 1999	73%
Bomberman World	November 1998	72%
In the Zone 99	May 1999	72%
Big Air	May 1999	70%
Bust-a-Move '99	April 1999	70%
NCAA March Madness 99	February 1999	70%
O.D.T.	December 1998	70%
TIN GAMES	**ISSUE**	**SCORE**
Tales of Destiny	November 1998	69%
Pro 18 World Tour Golf	April 1999	68%
Apocalypse	January 1999	49%

what do all those numbers mean?

98-100%
The ultimate gaming experience.

90-97%
"Must buy" games; each carries our editor's seal of approval and are recommended for fans of that genre.

80-89%
Good games, but lacking in some area; only for fans of that style of game.

70-79%
Mediocre titles that suffer from some serious flaws. Rent – don't buy.

0-69%
Tin games are to be avoided at all costs. Only die-hard gamers would buy these.

David Jon Winding
publisher

SEARCHING FOR THE FUN...

I was talking to a friend of mine on the phone earlier today. He had just told me that he was leaving the industry, after having worked in it for many years. Although the opportunity that he is pursuing is very exciting to him, he also cited a number of the reasons as to why he was leaving the gaming industry. He feels like much of the excitement for creative, new products has been lost in the game develpoment community and that all software publishers and retailers want are sequels to hit titles.

He's right. Of course, his observation would also have been correct in 1994-95 (the end of 16-bit), and in 1989-90 (the end of 8-bit). I have lived through the hardware generation transitions as both a consumer and an industry observer. It is all very cyclic and very predictable. In early 1996, Dimension Publishing entered into a contract with Capcom to produce "Resident Evil: The Official Strategy Guide" for North America. We were convinced that this Resident Evil game was going to be a huge hit. Guess what? Retail didn't agree. I had one buyer tell me that their "game guru" hadn't heard of the game and another doubted that the game was going to do anything. Well, we all know the history.

There is ALWAYS a certain amount of resistance to new ideas and franchises at the retailer level. They are not in the business of predicting hits... they simply react to products that sell. When a particular hardware platform gets near the end of its life-cycle, they get more and more conservative. On the PlayStation, that means that they want games with numbers as suffixes — 2000, 2, 3 and 4 being the most popular. They are looking for innovation to happen on the next-generation machines. Of, course, it won't happen there either, at least for now.

It has been my experience that the height of software creativity usually comes in years three and four of a platform's life. In year one, you've got the hardware manufacturer/first party software publisher carrying the banner high. Their developers are concentrating more on the graphic technology so that they can prove to you that there is a reason for you to buy a shiny new box. In year two, third party software publishers and developers are really getting involved for the first time — usually in the form of ports or upgrades from previous iterations of the same game. Of course, in year five, we have the scenario that I put forth earlier and the transition from one generation of hardware to the next.

So, from an industry insider perspective, we are in one of those periods where software is retailer driven and unique, creative concepts are few and farther between. But, you know what? It's better than it has been in the past, thanks largely to the PlayStation and its CD storage medium. Because of the short manufacturing time (and the smaller runs that can be accommodated) for Sony's CD's, it really isn't much of a problem if retail goes light when ordering a unique, new game. As long as the game is available at retail and the publisher has the confidence in the title to market it well, it has a chance with the consumer — even if retail doesn't have the same vision of success as the publisher.

Is the market sequel driven? Sure. Is the industry less fun to work in, in 1999, than it was in 1994? Probably. Is it going to get exciting again as we turn toward the new millennium and the release of PlayStation 2?

Oh, yeah!

Dave
dwinding@quake.net

Next Issue

in the issue

On the cover

Fighting Force 2

We understand your feelings of sadness and depression, realizing that, once again, you've come to the end of yet another near-perfect issue of PSExtreme. Well, we're here to tell you, "hey, it's ok". Just like the start of a brand new day, we will faithfully return to your favorite retailer's shelves in just a few short weeks (September 21st., to be exact). In the meantime, you can dwell on all of the cool things we're busy putting together for you, which include a relevant, in-depth feature on the unstoppable next-generation juggernaut, PlayStation 2, an Exclusive look at the trio of South Park titles coming out of Acclaim (Chef's Love Shack, South Park Rally and the 1st person South Park shooter), a cover feature on Eidos' new and improved Fighting Force 2 and both a review and comprehensive walk-through for Square's 4 CD RPG masterpiece, Final Fantasy VIII. Now... don't you feel better?

Special Feature

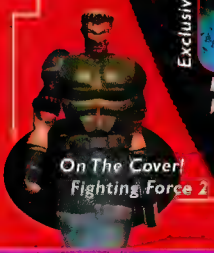
Walk-through of FFVIII

Exclusive

EA's Medal of Honor

Excerpt

We talk to Activision about WU-TANG



On The Cover! Fighting Force 2

Exclusive

Spotlight on: Rockstar

Exclusive

Southpark Rally

Stuck? Striving for Perfection? Dimension Publishing's got the answers to your questions on the hottest games.

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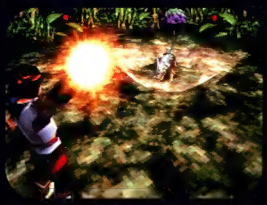

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PlayStation

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